The Creator and The Creation

JOHN YOUNG, L.L.D.

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THE CREATOR AND THE CREATION

Οππη γὰρ ἐμὸν νόον εἰρύσαιμι, εἰς ἓν ταὐτό τε πᾶν ἀνελύετο.

Fragment of Xenophanes.

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THE CREATOR AND THE CREATION

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BY JOHN YOUNG, LL.D. (EDIN.)
AUTHOR OF "THE CHRIST OF HISTORY"

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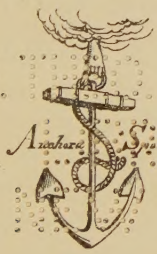

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"I have read this book (First Edition) with great interest, and much admire the ability with which the subject is treated. There are, indeed, some difficulties which, to my mind, have never been solved — perhaps they are insoluble. But with the exception of these, your work seems to me one of the best and most satisfactory which have appeared upon the subject."

The late SIR W. HAMILTON,
Edinburgh.

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PREFACE TO THE THIRD EDITION.

THIRTEEN years ago, the substance of the following pages was committed to the press. Some years later, with material alterations, the volume was again issued. The present edition is virtually a new work—in execution, and, above all, in spirit and aim. The changes in form and style are innumerable, with the view of simplifying a confessedly abstruse subject and rendering it more easily intelligible to general readers. But the difference is not formal only, it is essential. Longer and maturer investigation has led me to a conclusion which I was not before prepared to accept. At first, the intention was disclaimed of hazarding a solution of the mystery of evil. Nothing more was presumed, than to inquire what the mystery really was, and at what point in the line of our conceptions it arose. It was judged, that to move it back, however inconsiderably, to gain by ever so little on the encompassing darkness, to clear the smallest free space and to let what light was possible fall upon it, might prove of service to students of Providence and of God.

A step far in advance of this position is now ventured. It has seemed to me that a richer and more comprehensive meaning than I once was able to perceive, lies in these apostolic words, "It pleased the Father that

in him (Christ) should all fulness dwell, and . . . . by him (Christ) to reconcile *all things* unto Himself; by him I say, whether they be things on earth or things in heaven" (Col. i. 19, 20). These words clearly convey that Christ is the chosen Redeemer of the whole universe of being. They teach that the reconciliation and restoration to God of the entire creation, throughout the eternal ages, was the grand end of our Lord's life and death and reign, the end of all the vast, complicated, and seemingly inexplicable movements of earthly Providence, and of all the sacred dispensations, economies, and ministries of time. The conception is full of rapture, and it is as sanctifying as it is grand. Every pious human soul could but exult in the belief (were it shown to be scriptural, consistent, and rational) that God-in-Christ shall yet reign over an entire, regenerated, holy, and happy universe.

The language of the Apostle Paul, just quoted, distinct and emphatic as it is, belongs to a not small class of passages, quite as explicit and satisfactory: a few of which may here be adduced. "God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world: but that *the world* through Him might be saved" (John iii. 17). "I, if I be lifted up, will draw *all men* unto me" (John xii. 32). In connection with this utterance, the divine words of the Old Testament are remarkable. "Look unto me, and be ye saved, *all ye ends of the earth:* for I am God, and there is none else" (Isaiah xlv. 22). "As by the offence of one judgment came upon *all men* to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon *all men* unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience *many* were made sinners, even so, by the

obedience of one, shall *many* be made righteous" (Rom. v. 18, 19). The *many* in the one verse are manifestly the *all* in the other. "Blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so *all Israel* shall be saved" (Rom. xii. 25). "As in Adam *all* die, even so in Christ shall *all* be made alive" (1 Cor. xv. 22). "God, who will have *all men* to be saved" (1 Tim. ii. 4). "God, the Saviour *of all men*, specially of those that believe"—certainly therefore of others, who do not believe (1 Tim. iv. 10).

Independently of the scriptural evidence, there are two great principles, in which the belief of universal salvation is firmly grounded. First, the absolute inpreventability of moral evil, in free, finite beings. God alone is Infallible and Immutable, because He alone is Self-existent and Eternal. All finite beings, in the finity of their nature, which neither they nor their Maker could change, are fallible, and have actually fallen, either as individuals or as races. Second, It is inconceivable, because it would uproot our deepest moral convictions and principles, that the infinitely Loving, Pure, and Blessed God could create a single being, fore-knowing, and above all fore-ordaining, that that being should exist in eternal *sin*, the thing which He infinitely abhors, even if no eternal misery were entailed by it; much more, when eternal sin must be also eternal misery.

To my co-religionists of the evangelical school, I humbly commend a conclusion, to which none of them can be more sternly averse than I once was, but which I now believe to be full of glory to the ever-blessed Redeemer and to The Great Father of all souls.

CONTENTS.

THE CREATOR AND THE CREATION.

IN THREE PARTS.

PART I.—GOD.
,, II.—THE CREATION.
,, III.—GOD AND THE FACTS OF THE CREATION.

INTRODUCTION.

PAGE

Perplexity of Subject.—Material, Moral Kingdoms.—Physical, Moral Evil.—Moral Liberty.—Fore-knowledge, Fore-ordination.—Series of Difficulties.—How far removable . . 3—7

PART I.—GOD.

Being and Working.—Infinite Perfection.—Moral, the Holiest Region of Divine.—Its Reality.—Involved in Intellectual.—Virtue Eternal in Eternal Nature.—Human Conscience, the Uncreated Conscience.—Excellence in Created, Reflection of Uncreated.—The Infinite One, All-Perfect.—Difficulties of Providence.—Solved or unsolved, Uncreated Moral Perfection Abides . . . . . 9—25

PART II.—THE CREATION.

IN THREE CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER I.—CREATION.
,, II.—THE KINGDOM OF MATTER.
,, III.—THE KINGDOM OF SPIRIT.

CHAPTER I.

CREATION.

PAGE

Incomprehensible.—Modern Pantheistic Notions.—Contradictory and Blasphemous.—"The Unconditioned."—Nonentity unconditioned.—Hegel's Axiom.—The Infinite, the Eternal Positive.—Pantheism, Fallacy of.—Cousin.—Fact of Creation alone.—Thoughts, our Creations.—Locke.—Mind, Matter, Divine Creations . . . . . 29—45

CHAPTER II.

THE KINGDOM OF MATTER.

Uncreated and Created.—First Relationship.—Creating and Governing, their Connection.—Almighty Agency a Necessity.—Physical Laws.—Will in Combination with Power.—God's Universal Presence and Working.—"The One" reigning over All . . . . . 47—60

CHAPTER III.

THE KINGDOM OF SPIRIT.

Phenomena of Mind and of Matter.—Disorder of Moral World.—No Human Plan.—Plan of God.—Intelligence Reigning.—Moral Laws.—Progressive Development.—Not Direct.—Realisation.—Destiny of Man.—Human and Divine Agency.—How combined . . . . . 61—70

PART III.—GOD AND THE FACTS OF THE CREATION.

IN TWO CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER I.—PHYSICAL AND MORAL EVIL IN THE LIGHT OF REASON.

,, II.—PHYSICAL AND MORAL EVIL IN THE LIGHT OF REVELATION.

CHAPTER I.

PHYSICAL AND MORAL EVIL IN THE LIGHT OF REASON.

In Six Sections.

SECTION I.—RESPONSIBILITY.

,, II.—MORAL POWER THE NECESSARY CONDITION AND MEASURE OF RESPONSIBILITY.

,, III.—MORAL EVIL THE VOLUNTARY ABUSE OF MORAL POWER.

,, IV.—CREATOR INFINITELY OPPOSED TO MORAL EVIL.

,, V.—PHYSICAL, THE EFFECT, BUT ALSO THE CORRECTIVE, OF MORAL EVIL.

,, VI.—MORAL EVIL INEVITABLE AND REMEDIABLE.

SECTION I.—RESPONSIBILITY. PAGE

Grounded in Conscience.—Moral Intuitions.—Higher Significance.—Doctrine of God.—Eternal Guardian of Truth and Right.—Immortality.—Original Intuition.—Accountability. —Man must meet his God. . . . . 83—94

SECTION II.—MORAL POWER THE NECESSARY CONDITION AND MEASURE OF RESPONSIBILITY.

Power, Freedom, Harmony of "The Uncreated."—Certainty and Constancy, not Necessity but Liberty.—Man.—His

PAGE

Structure. I. Conscious Power of Choice.—Physiological, Philosophical, Theological Difficulties.—Material and Moral Causation.—Necessariness in Human Choice.—How and why. —Self-created and imposed.—Man's Absolute Dependence. —Will secondary yet real Independence.—Cause of Choice within, not without.—"Autonomy" of Will.—Kant.—Coleridge. — Reid. — Hamilton. — Inconceivableness of Moral Liberty.—Cousin.—Will its own Law.—Self-determining Power, Misnomer.—"Last Judgment."—"Greatest apparent Good."—No Law to Will, out of Itself.—Fatalism.— II. Adequate Endowment essential to Power of Choice.— Maniac.—Lower Animals.—Force of Habit.—Sensualism.— Irresponsible Inability.—Voluntary Loss of Power, Crime.— Moral Malformation.—Righteous Condition and Criterion 95—137

SECTION III.—MORAL EVIL THE VOLUNTARY ABUSE OF MORAL POWER.

Material and Moral Universe.—Resisting Force in one, not in other.—Men, Persons, not Things.—Crime, its Reality and Spread.—Dilettante Morality.—Moral Antitheses.—Philosophical Necessity.—Leibnitz, Soame Jenyns.—Matter, Seat of Evil.—Higher Laws of Man's Being.—Essence of Crime, Voluntariness.—Suspension of Law of Gravitation.—Moral Disorder.—Mystery of Created Will.—Almighty resisted.— Moral Power abused . . . . . 139—150

SECTION IV.—CREATOR INFINITELY OPPOSED TO MORAL EVIL.

I. Physical Evil, conceivable.—Moral Evil, unalterably hateful. —Language of earlier Theology.—II. Motive in Creating.— No ulterior End, higher than highest End.—Benevolence, Moral Excellence, own End.—Necessity of Creation.—M. Cousin.—Resistless, Creative Lovingness.—III. Universe, Intelligent, Moral, Voluntary.—IV. Will not Necessitable. —Resistance to God, a daily Fact.—First false Choice.— "God could prevent, and did not."—Edwards.—V. Foreknowledge and Predestination.—God, Eternal Antagonist of Moral Evil . . . . . 151—178

SECTION V.—PHYSICAL, THE EFFECT, BUT ALSO THE CORRECTIVE, OF MORAL EVIL.

PAGE

Sin, its own Punishment.—Necessarily Physical.—Affecting Susceptibilities, Structure, Being, of Soul.—Physical Evils, strictly so called. I. Connection of Mind and Body.—Animal Structure.—Pain, &c., &c.—II. Hereditary, Representationary Constitution of Human Race. — Extension, Propagation of Suffering.— Forms, Degrees, Distributions of Physical Evil, from God.—Their End, Highest Moral Good. —Suffering, Instrument wherewith to destroy Sin . 179—196

SECTION VI.—EVIL INEVITABLE, BUT REMEDIABLE.

God alone Infallible.—Finite Being necessarily Fallible.—Thorough Experience of Evil, Redeemed from Evil.—Divine Interposition and Influence.—Probation, Universal and Unrestricted.—Must be so, if Free Beings.—Probation and Purgation.—Free Will and Force.—God and Spiritual Influence.—Light of Reason and Conscience.—Evil Conceivable, if Universally Remediable . . . 197—213

CHAPTER II.

PHYSICAL AND MORAL EVIL IN THE LIGHT OF REVELATION.

In Four Sections.

SECTION I.—EVIL IN THE UNIVERSE.

,, II.—COURSE OF EVIL ON EARTH, AND INFLUENCES DIRECTED AGAINST IT.

,, III.—CONQUEST OF EVIL THROUGH CHRIST AND CHRISTIANITY.

,, IV.—DESTINY OF MORAL UNIVERSE.

SECTION I.—EVIL IN THE UNIVERSE.

Two Orders of Intelligent Moral Being. I. Angels.—Spirits. —Absence of External Temptation.—Probation, Responsibility. — First Sin, Ambition. — Aggravations. — Creator,

PAGE

wholly apart from it.—All His Agency opposed to it.—II. Man.—Reason, Conscience, Will.—Compound Being.—Structure, Guarded. — External Temptation. — Protection against Internal not possible.—Lesser Protection needless.—Temptation not cause of Sin.—Exposes only what is Within.—Human Sin Remediable.—Creator, no Part in it.—Opposing it . . . . . 219—234

SECTION II.—THE COURSE OF EVIL ON OUR EARTH AND THE INFLUENCES DIRECTED AGAINST IT.

I. Divine Benignity.—Longevity of Early Races of Men.—II. Divine Judgment.—Deluge.—Geological, Moral Difficulties.—Mercy and Judgment.—III. Exceptional Elective System.—Jewish Dispensation.—Its Origin, Love to Man.—No Partiality, Favouritism.—Expedient for Preservation of Truth.—How far Effective . . . . . 235—252

SECTION III.—FINAL CONQUEST OF EVIL THROUGH CHRIST AND CHRISTIANITY.

I. Incarnation of Divinity.—II. New Expression and Medium of Mercy.—III. Perfect Humanity.—IV. New Revelation of Spiritual Truth.—V. New Fountain and Channel of Holy Ghost . . . . . 253—280

SECTION IV.—DESTINY OF THE MORAL UNIVERSE.

Darkness and Light.—Not to be Eternal.—Universe of Light.—Friendships of Eternity.—Benevolent Action.—Spiritual Energy.—Self-development.—Studies of the Future.—Interminable Progress. — Mental, Moral Life. — Perfection, Blessedness.—"Life Eternal" . . . . 281—298

THE CREATOR AND THE CREATION.

IN THREE PARTS.

PART I. GOD.

II. THE CREATION.

III. GOD AND THE FACTS OF THE CREATION.

INTRODUCTION.

PERPLEXITY OF SUBJECT.—CREATION.—MATERIAL AND MORAL KINGDOMS.—PHYSICAL AND MORAL EVIL.—MORAL LIBERTY.—FORE-KNOWLEDGE.—FORE-ORDINATION.—SERIES OF DIFFICULTIES, HOW FAR REMOVABLE.

THE transition is measureless from God to the universe, from "The Uncreated," in Himself, as a truth of reason, to the products of His almighty will, and to His agency, as a fact in the existing condition and government of the world. Manifold questions start up on the first approach to this region; they are profound, distressing, and dark. What is creation? its nature, its mode, its date? What is the final cause of creation, and of such a creation as exists? Did it originate in a necessity, or in a deliberate choice? Did it spring from pure benevolence, a desire to produce beings fitted for spiritual glory, and surrounded with materials and means adapted to this high end? or was it, owing to a righteous and wise purpose, to exhibit personal excellence and to secure merited honour? On the same ground, supposing a real and constant Divine action in human affairs, is the governing impulse benevolence or self-manifestation?

The reality of Almighty agency beyond the instant and the act of creation, and the nature of that agency and its

extent and its laws, are still questions—questions perhaps indeterminable.

In the two widely-separated kingdoms of the existing universe—the material and the moral—is there a distinction as to the agency put forth from above, and if so, what is its precise character?—a distinction between the control exercised over intelligent moral beings and the production of mechanical, chemical, and physiological trains of phenomena?

One of the dark mysteries of our world is physical evil. Is the fact of its existence reconcilable with the moral attributes of the Supreme, and especially with His goodness? Moral evil is a mystery unutterably darker still; it is the one, all-embracing mystery of time. But is there such a thing? What is moral evil, strictly, universally? Its essence, its voluntariness, or necessariness, its forms, its issue, how shall they be interpreted? Was the entrance of this plague into the universe inevitable? Was there no alternative between no intelligent creation at all and the certain existence of moral evil? Or, although it was possible to have prevented its introduction, did it appear best, on the whole, to eternal rectitude and wisdom, because productive of a larger amount of good than could otherwise have been secured, not to prevent it?

The mystery of moral evil opens out into the question of moral liberty. Is there such a thing to man as freedom of will? What is its essential meaning, what are its conditions, and what its criterion? Man's conscious nature is threefold—sensational, intellectual, and moral. In accordance with his complex constitution, he has

desires that belong to his animal organisation, others that arise from his rational being, and others that are connected especially with his responsible moral nature. Besides desires thus various in kind, he has perceptions and judgments, respecting what is true or false, wise or unwise, useful or hurtful. In addition to these, again, he has moral sentiments and convictions, a sense of right and wrong, an inward persuasion that one thing is imperative while another is culpable. Desires, judgments, affections, and moral convictions constitute his conscious nature. By which of these classes of influences, or by what combination of them, is he governed, in his volitions and actions? Has he, or has he not, the power of determining his own choice? Are his determinations necessary, invariably following, according to a fixed law, the impulse of his desires, or the verdict of his judgment, or the command of his conscience? Or do all these three together affect the decision of his will, and what amount of influence is attributable to each in the final result?

Free agency in man and Divine predetermination, or even fore-knowledge, seem to be mutually destructive. Can they be reconciled? On the one hand, if man be altogether free, must not the events which make up the history of the world be a succession of contingencies? There is an evident doubtfulness involved in man's free choice, for this may seem to take one direction or another indifferently; and, whatever be its issue, it depends on man himself at the moment. Can any future event be considered certain if man be thus free? Can there be a settled providence in the world, a fixed course of events,

having a sure and determinate aim, if all, nevertheless, be dependent on the uncertainty of human volitions? On the other hand, if man be not a free agent, can he be a responsible agent? Moral liberty, moral power, seems to be the condition and the measure of responsibility. So far as a being is necessitated to any course, has no choice, no power on the one side or the other, he can be the object neither of praise nor blame. The good or the evil of that course must be attributed, not to him, but to the author of the necessity under which he acts.

The dark and complicated phenomena of providence, as they rise up in the past history of the world, and in its existing condition, are before us. How shall we on the one hand interpret the mental and moral constitution of man, and on the other hand do justice to the supremacy of "The Infinite One," and to the real relations in which He stands to creatures? We behold the sufferings and the crimes of men, both tremendous in amount, and pressing down on myriads till they fall into the grave. Shall we venture a suspicion that the pressure may continue even beyond the grave? Terrible calamities are crushing our race, but, worse than all, principles are corrupted, affections are polluted, character is debased, mental and moral perdition is begun. Perhaps perdition extends and deepens for ever. How shall we vindicate the character of the Creator and Ruler in the face of such appalling phenomena, and yet more appalling apprehensions? Why did He give existence to such a world? Why does He continue to suffer such a state of things? Can we reconcile what we behold, even with the rectitude of the Supreme Being, at all events with His good-

ness; or if with these, how with His infinite wisdom, to which the state of the world seems so violent a contradiction; or if with His wisdom, yet how with His infinite power?

Thou Only Mighty! who makest strong the weak, empower us to understand and to vindicate Thy ways! Thou Only Fountain of wisdom! pour down for us Thine own light on the course of Thy providence below! Reveal Thy holy path, through the troubled affairs of men! Where Thy footsteps are lost in darkness which we cannot pierce, let us steadfastly believe that Thou yet walkest in unsullied purity. May no suspicion of Thine infinite perfection darken our heart! Wherever darkness rest, be it still our immovable faith that "all is rectitude, and light, and love in Thee!"

If there be verily a providence of God in the world, it can have its foundation only in the essential character of the Great Being Himself, in the distinguishing attributes and most of all in the moral perfections of His Nature.

Passing from these, we confront the perplexing phenomena of the actual world. And last of all, it is necessary to place the Divine attributes by the side of the facts of human observation and experience in order to judge how far they be harmonious or discordant.

PART FIRST.

GOD.

BEING AND WORKING.—INFINITE PERFECTION.—MORAL THE HOLIEST REGION OF DIVINE.—HIGHEST GLORY.—ITS REALITY.—INVOLVED IN INTELLECTUAL.—VIRTUE ETERNAL IN ETERNAL NATURE.—HUMAN CONSCIENCE, THE UNCREATED CONSCIENCE.—EXCELLENCE IN CREATED, REFLECTION OF UNCREATED.—THE INFINITE ONE ALL PERFECT.—DIFFICULTIES OF PROVIDENCE.—SOLVED OR UNSOLVED, UNCREATED MORAL PERFECTION ABIDES.

BEING AND WORKING.

FREE working is only and always the reflex of individual being. The person, as he is, essentially and morally, never fails to send forth in his life an unconscious but true counterpart of himself; so that were we beforehand to ascertain his fixed inner principles, we should be able—supposing him entirely faithful and free—to predict, with certainty, the character of his public course. The informing soul constructs, inspires, and gives the whole expression and form to the body of outward manifestation. What any being does is determined by what that being is. The inquiry (reverent and humble it ought to be) into the attributes, and especially the moral attributes, of the Ruler of the Universe, is preliminary and paramount. We do not, in this way, reach historically the facts of His agency, and, in their seeming, these may distressingly contravene our conclusions; but we shall distinctly arrive at the originative and formative cause of these facts. We cannot hereby learn what the Divine administration of the universe actually is, but we shall certainly learn what it must essentially be, whatever existing phenomena may seem to convey.

The words of the most ancient and holy book in the world meet us here, as at every point of the great subject

which we presume to treat, like a voice of warning from above. They are stirring words in themselves, venerable by their antiquity, and touchingly solemn by their association with the spiritual history of man. As an utterance of individual sentiment, in this place their appropriateness is felt. "Canst thou by searching find out God, canst thou find out the Almighty to perfection? It is as high as heaven, what canst thou do? It is deeper than hades, what canst thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth and broader than the sea."

Being—Uncreated, Eternal, Alone! It is impossible to ascend the measureless height of the conception, impossible to compass its illimitable breadth, impossible to fathom the unfathomable! And yet there are some things involved in this transcendent reality which seem as sure and as clear as our own existence. Uncreated must be Mental Being. This seems an invincible necessity of all thought. Whatever else, or whatever more it be, it must be Mental Being. There must be an original fountain from which all the intelligence diffused throughout the universe has issued. The thinking beings that people all worlds with their marvellous and manifold endowments, once, were not. The Supreme willed and they rayed forth, gleams of light from the Uncreated Sun. The mighty principles that are at work in the creation, the magnificent, complicated, and vast designs which it reveals, the beautiful, sublime, and grand thoughts which it expresses, once, were not—at least in this embodiment. They must have belonged to an original Eternal Mind, and were uttered out from it. But these, whatever be their grandeur and their number, cannot exhaust the

opulence of that mind, and cannot mark the limit of its possessions. Must not Uncreated intelligence of necessity be unlimited? Limitation here is gratuitous and groundless; what is more, let the limit we fix be ever so remote, if there be a limit at all, then something beyond is ever possible, that is, being in a higher form can be conceived; and we have sunk from the idea of "the ultimate, the highest, the eternal existence," the fountain of all other being; have conditioned that which is before and above all conditions, and contradicted and nullified the *sine quâ non* of our own conception. The native home of all truth must be the Eternal Mind. All the knowable and all possible power of knowing must dwell there, because otherwise we have not fulfilled the necessity imposed by our reason, and have failed to rise to the highest possible form of existence. Thrown back on Being, *per se*, Eternal, alone, to limit is to destroy the essential idea. All that is not contradictory, all that is possible, is here necessarily true; exaggeration there cannot be, so long as we look only to that which is really great and good.

But this awful Being, Himself limitless, has and maintains intimate connections with limited natures. Unrelated to time, for to His existence succession is impossible; unrelated also to space, for God is not extended, and is of no magnitude; He stands, nevertheless, in enduring relation to those who are conditioned both by time and space. He is not far from the creation, but very near—near in His entire Godhead, to every atom and every being. Every atom, every being, exists every moment in His immediate, perfect perception. He is

the radiant, open, vast eye of the universe, which never slumbers and never shuts, and which is ever as perfectly percipient of the minutest point as if nothing else were within the range of vision. Magnificent are the inspirations of the ancient bard! and they awaken an echo in the depths of every soul of man: "Whither shall I go from Thy spirit or whither shall I flee from Thy presence? . . . If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall Thy hand lead me. . . . If I say surely the darkness shall cover me, even the night shall be light about me. Yea the darkness hideth not from Thee, but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to Thee." Yet sublimer and more daring is the fancy of the burdened and soul-rapt prophet. He seems to hear the Eternal speak: "Am I a God at hand, saith the Lord, and not a God afar off? Can any hide himself in secret places, that I shall not see him, saith the Lord? Do not I fill heaven and earth, saith the Lord?"

Limitation, on no side, is possible to the First, the Highest, the sole Eternal; He must be all-present, all-seeing, all-powerful, all-knowing, and all-wise. But His physical attributes, with all their glory, are both less questioned than His moral perfections, and less related to the purpose of this investigation. We have to do with the "moral" rather than the "physical" in the Supreme Nature—a region unutterably sacred—like another "Holy of Holies," the innermost recess of the uncreated temple. There is a sanctity here, to which the hush of perfect silence and the worship of pure thought, too deep for articulate expression, are alone congenial. The susceptible

and awakened soul is struck with the profoundest awe in this secret and mysterious sphere. To be morally excellent is a higher elevation than to be physically or intellectually great. Physical and even intellectual excellences are not to be compared with spiritual virtues. The moral, indeed, must have its basis in the intellectual, and is ever elevated in worth, with the intellectual stature and strength. The security and the power of virtue, as a governing principle in the soul, are determined by the character of the understanding; and the better instructed and the more enlightened the intellect, the stronger and the sounder is the growth of all those higher principles which have their root in this soil. But moral worth takes rank above mere intellectual greatness. It is the bloom and flower of the spiritual nature, the charm and the crown of the rational being. The physical omnipotence of the Uncreated One, and even His omniscience and His wisdom, belong to a lower scale than His rectitude, His purity, His truth, and His love. No intricate principles of valuation and no lengthened processes of arithmetic are needed in order to reach this conclusion; it is an intuitive and universal judgment. Spiritual worth is the highest glory of any rational nature; and in the Divine Nature it is this which presents the strongest claim to the admiration, the reverence, and the love of all creatures. Wherever intrusion may be lawful, at least no unhallowed tread must be suffered to violate this region. The very last of many things, not to be dared in connection with God, is the remotest suspicion affecting the hidden principles of His moral being.

The Spiritual Perfection of the Supreme offers a noble

opportunity of elevated, freshening, and sanctifying illustration. The field is inexhaustibly interesting, and the labour would be abundantly remunerative, to take up separately the eternal and immutable principles of moral excellence, and to strive to conceive them in their sacred home. But it falls to us rather, to deal with the reality and the perfection of spiritual excellence in God, as the necessary foundation of those great laws by which the administration of the universe must be guided. It is enough to touch the "summa fastigia rerum," to suggest without pursuing trains of thought which admit of indefinite extension, and contain, also, the germ of many a profound and vexed speculation. The more willingly a limit is imposed here, because it is in a later stage that most minds will feel acutely the pressure of difficulty, difficulty perhaps on some sides insurmountable. Here the purpose is to strengthen, rather than to create, conviction and sympathy; for, thus far, the disciples and the rejecters of written Revelation are nearly at one.

The first and best of English Theists, Lord Herbert, devoutly recognises the rectitude, purity, and goodness of the Supreme; and his profound, childlike veneration of God, and his humility and earnestness, are most touching. The brother of George Herbert, but for his strange rejection of the divine word, was not unlike, in spirit, the poet of "the Temple." Lord Shaftesbury, more elegant and accomplished than Herbert, but less profound, religiously and morally, does not violate the holier region of the Divine. With all his errors, he upholds the essential distinction between virtue and vice, warms into nobility of sentiment when he describes the beauty of goodness,

and points to the wisdom, justice, and benevolence that preside in the government of the world. Chubb wants the grace (not the force) of the aristocratic defenders of Theism, and offends by a peculiar aridity, hardness, and coldness. He also refuses the idea of a particular providence, which the others did not. But even he does not impugn the moral excellence of the Almighty; and in his supplement to "the previous question," inserts in the title these words, "wherein the moral character of God is more fully vindicated."* Lord Bolingbroke, sparkling, piquant, masterly, but splenetic and malignant, oversteps the limits which had been marked by Herbert and Shaftesbury, and assumes a more irreverent and defiant front. His views of providence, and even of immortality, are more than suspicious; and the doctrine of future rewards and punishments he throws aside without disguise. Ostensibly, his rejection of this doctrine arises from the desire to maintain the character of God; and very ingeniously he charges theologians with blaspheming the Almighty, and misrepresenting the condition of the world and the conduct of providence, in order to found an argument for a future state. With his false views of a judgment to come, of moral obligation, and of the nature of virtue, it is not wonderful that his scepticism should seem to extend even to God. But even he never denied the Divine moral character. He upheld it very distinctly and decidedly, but he sought to becloud it and so to envelope it in mystery that it should no longer serve the purposes of artificial theology. "The Divine (moral) attributes," he

* London, 1725.

says,* "are exercised in such innumerable relations, absolutely unknown to us, that though we are sure the exercise of them in the immensity of the universe is always directed by the All-Perfect Being to that which is fittest on the whole, yet the notions of created beings, like us, who see them in one relation alone, cannot be applied to them with any propriety, nor with any certainty, sufficient to make them objects of imitation." Again: "As little can we rise from our moral obligations to His (God's) supposed moral attributes. I call them supposed, because after all that has been said to prove a necessary connection between His physical and His moral attributes, the latter may all be absorbed in His wisdom."† Again: "God is, in their (theologians') notions of Him, nothing more than an infinite man. He knows as we know, is wise as we are wise, and moral as we are moral."‡ Again: "His (Dr. Sam. Clarke's) whole chain of reasoning, from the moral attributes downwards, is nothing more than one continued application of moral human ideas to the designs and conduct of God."§ Again: "They (divines) parcel out a Divine moral nature into various attributes like the human, and determine precisely what these attributes require that God should do, to make His will conformable to the eternal ideas of fitness."‖ With all this, Bolingbroke does not deny the absolute moral perfection of the Almighty. He will not admit that this is the ground of moral obligation; and hence asserts that virtue in God must be so entirely dif-

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. iii. p. 412. London, 1754.
† Vol. iv. p. 18. ‡ P. 296.
§ Vol. v. p. 5 ‖ P. 77.

ferent from virtue in us, that we are not justified in reasoning from the one to the other. But he distinctly and strongly upholds the perfect excellence of God. "It required," says he, "no such metaphysical apparatus as Clarke employed, somewhat tediously, to prove that all perfections, natural and moral, must be attributes of the self-existent, all-perfect Author of all being; but he does not prove what he asserts, and on the proof of which his whole argument turns, that these attributes are the same in God as they are in our ideas."* "A necessary connection between the natural and moral attributes of God, no man who believes in Him will deny; all the perfections of an all-perfect being must be consistent and connected; to be otherwise, would be imperfection."† "They (Theists) ascribe all conceivable perfections to God, moral and physical, which can belong to a Divine Nature and to a Supreme Being."‡ "Supposing the world we inhabit to be a scene of as many evils as it is represented to be, the arguments drawn from thence against the wisdom, or power, or goodness of God are inconclusive."§ After describing the condition of mankind, Lord Bolingbroke says: "What could we ask more of a Beneficent Creator? Let us adore His goodness and His justice (if we will ascribe our ideas of moral attributes to Him) as well as His wisdom and His power."‖ "He (the Theist) is as far from denying them (the moral attributes) as he is from denying the wisdom and the power of God." "He acknowledges whatever God has done to be just and good in itself, though it does

* Vol. iv. p. 249. † P. 224. ‡ P. 298.
§ Vol. v. p. 1. ‖ Vol. v. p. 112.

not appear such in every instance, conformably to his ideas of justice and goodness." * "God is infinitely wise; He does always that which is fittest to be done. That which is fittest to be done is always just and good, and the dispute is over." †

The moral is no less essential and real than the intellectual nature of the Great Being; the one is necessarily involved in the other. Virtue is wisdom, though it is also much more, it is wisdom applied to the highest sphere of thought and of volition; vice is always folly, though it is also much more and much worse, it is utter folly and irrationality. But intelligence, pure, mere intelligence, eternally dissociated from moral principles, perceptions, and sympathies, is inconceivable. The idea, besides, is perfectly gratuitous, sustained by no experience, and suggested by no plausible reason. If the lower animals exhibit signs of intellect, as they certainly do, though they have no moral faculty, no responsible nature, this is their imperfection, their degradation, and is felt and acknowledged by all to be their imperfection, their degradation. The reality of moral perceptions and judgments in the Divine Being is argued precisely on the grounds which sustain our belief in His wisdom and knowledge, and, in point of fact, none who have any consistent idea of an Intelligent First Cause are found to deny the moral nature, and the moral perfection of that Cause.

The old, well-tried and solid, though almost disused argument, must not be overlooked. Virtue, as conceived

* Vol. iv. p. 299. † P. 300.

by our minds, necessarily involves the idea of the existence of a Virtuous Being. The thing, the quality, is in itself eternal and immutable, that is to say, it is not temporary, not variable, not dependent on time or place or person. Virtue, real spiritual excellence never was, and never can be, other than it is, independent of all circumstances, times, and beings, an everlasting, unchangeable reality.* But itself is simply an attribute, a mode of being, not a being; and it has, therefore, and can have, no real existence, out of conception, except in a substance, a subject: itself, as an attribute, eternal, it presumes the existence of an eternal nature, in which it resides an infinitely righteous, truthful, loving, and pure nature, of which, though not the product, it must have been the everlasting possession and glory. "It is all one," says Cudworth, in his quaint, strong way, "to affirm that there are eternal essences of things and verities necessarily existing (he himself applies this to moral as well as intellectual entities), and to say that there is an Infinite, Eternal Mind, necessarily existing; they are nothing but modifications of mind or intellect, and therefore the First Intellect (we add, Moral Nature) is essentially and archetypally such essences and verities."†

It must be added, with strong confidence, that conscience in man guides us, in a silent but quite resistless way, up to the Uncreated, Eternal sense of right and wrong, the Eternal dwelling of spiritual attributes, perceptions, and principles. The Creator could not have

* Clarke's Evid. of Rev. Religion, pp. 40—46. London, 1716.

† Cudworth's Eternal and Immutable Morality. Works, vol. iii. p. 628. London, 1845.

implanted in the human breast a sense of virtue and of vice, an appreciation, an admiration, a love of what is spiritually excellent, had He Himself been destitute of this quality. If man be so constituted that he approves and admires right, and condemns (even though he be capable of perpetrating) wrong, man's Maker must Himself be virtuous. Never could he have created a nature which is compelled by its very constitution to dislike and despise Him, if he be not morally excellent. The excellences and powers that are found in creatures must have descended from the Creator as their original source, and it is clearly impossible that a single real virtue can exist in them which has not its sole fountain in Him. The workmanship reveals, in its structure, the qualities of the artificer: He who endowed man with moral powers must himself be a moral being. All the goodness of creatures is an impartation from Him, a reflection of His uncreated excellence, but it is only a reflection; and reflected light is not comparable with direct unborrowed effulgence. Virtue in man is mediate, derived, limited; virtue in the Maker is immediate, original, unlimited. The uncreated Nature is necessarily unlimited in all its properties and powers, moral, no less than intellectual or physical, and whatever spiritual grace is found in it must exist in the highest possible degree. In a sphere which knows no beginning, no end, and no change, limitation on any side is impossible, but, above all, on that side which reaches to the most sacred depths of Divine Being. The contrary supposition is not only perfectly gratuitous, it is ruinous. The slightest taint of falsehood, injustice, impurity, malevolence in the Eternal, is without ground

from within or from without, and would involve the most disastrous consequences to the universe, consequences which do not follow, in fact, but the very reverse of which we behold everywhere. Were such a thing believed, or even suspected, there could be no security for good anywhere, evermore, and no refuge from the dread of evil; trust in God, or between man and man, would be impossible. We return with entire assurance to the general argument, if, in reference to any property or power, in any direction, we should imagine limitation in the Supreme, if we should admit the possibility that there might be something higher and better than His Nature, that moment we should fall from the essential conditions of the idea of the Highest Being, the fountain of all other being, beyond whom there is nothing to be conceived. In Him, all the possible is the absolutely true; every possible excellence, and every excellence in the highest possible degree, must glow in His pure and perfect nature. Rectitude, purity, benevolence, truth, moral beauty and worth, all incapable of limit, must find in Him their original, eternal abode.

On the ground of general reasoning, the difficulty of satisfying the reflecting and the candid is by no means great. It is not here chiefly, or at all, that difficulty is felt; it is wholly in the sphere of experience and of fact. The existing condition of this world, it is said, is irreconcilable with a Supreme governing power. There are such revolting inequalities in the system of things, such an amount of crime, on the one hand, and such desolating calamities, such enormous and universal suffering, on the other hand, that it is hard to retain a steady confidence

in the rectitude, and still more in the goodness, of the Great Ruler, or, if in these, at all events in His wisdom and His power.

The aim of this book is to mark, as far as may be possible, the harmony between the true doctrine of God and the facts of the universe. But while pursuing this aim we must suggest that no inability on the part of man to solve the difficulties of the case can justify even suspicion, far less disbelief, of the essential moral attributes of the Supreme. Reason will humbly presume that the cause of such inability must lie in ourselves, in the limitation of our faculties and of our knowledge, and will judge that, with higher powers and more comprehensive views, we might behold only harmony where now we see disorder, and only consistency where now we find seeming contradiction.

Aided by the hints which have been thrown out, we can understand what the principles on which the administration of the universe is conducted, must necessarily be; and reason demands, all contrary appearances notwithstanding, that we recognise this transcendent necessity, and hold fast the doctrine of Infinite Moral Perfection. The principles of the Divine working can have their origin only in the Divine Nature, and must be entirely and perfectly consistent with the moral attributes of that Nature. They must be, necessarily must be, not only those of perfect wisdom and justice, but of perfect sincerity and ingenuousness, of pure generosity and disinterestedness. There can be no unrighteousness and no folly with the Supreme, no duplicity, no deceptive concealment, no putting forth of a pretext while the real

ground lurks behind, no selfishness, not even indifference to the interests of the humblest creature, nothing but pure transparency and irrepressible righteousness and goodness in all His ways.

The rectitude, veracity, purity, benevolence, and, withal, paternity of the Divine Being, we take, as first principles, eternal, immutable truths. Even if we be unable to comprehend the consistency of these truths with the phenomena of the universe, they are not, therefore, the less truths; and we shall no more think of denying the truths because of the phenomena, than of suspecting the reality of the phenomena because of the truths. Right reason commands and compels us, in the face of whatever difficulties, to hold fast the moral perfection of the Supreme Creator and Lord of the universe. He can neither be nor do anything that is not morally excellent and beautiful, worthy of the approbation, the admiration, and the veneration of all His intelligent creatures.

PART SECOND.

THE CREATION.

IN THREE CHAPTERS.

Chapter I. Creation.
II. The Kingdom of Matter.
III. The Kingdom of Spirit.

CHAPTER I.

CREATION.

INCOMPREHENSIBLE—NOT CONTRADICTORY TO REASON.—MODERN PANTHEISTIC NOTION.—CONTRADICTORY BLASPHEMIES.—"THE UNCONDITIONED."—NON-BEING, UNCONDITIONED.—HEGEL'S AXIOM.—THE INFINITE, THE ETERNAL POSITIVE.—PANTHEISM, CONTRADICTORY.—COUSIN.—FACT OF CREATION ALONE.—LOCKE.—THOUGHTS *our* CREATIONS.—MIND, MATTER, DIVINE CREATIONS.

DERIVED EXISTENCE.

THE idea, in its awful depth and compass, of which the generic term, creation, is the accepted sign, it is for ever impossible for a finite mind to grasp. A single faltering step, towards the abysmal secret, we venture to take with trembling and awe.

Creation is not something rising up out of absolute nonentity. It assumes existence in one form, it presupposes Being, Being infinite and eternal, but only this. As the act of the Eternal One, creation is not the bringing of something out of nothing, as if nothing were either the material or the place, out of which something is brought.* It is not the conversion of nothing into something, as if nothing were a kind of substratum on which infinite power acted. But, so far as we are capable of shaping and embodying it, creation is "causing new, absolutely new and other existence." That is all. An instant ago (it is supposed) there was absolutely nothing, save the one Eternal Life, but this instant, something else and other has begun to be—caused to be—strictly created by the Almighty will of God.

It must not be concealed that an opposite conviction

* Cudworth's Intell. Sys. vol. iii. sec. ii. chap. v. London, 1845.

is entertained in these days by Christian men. Disciples (more or less) of Jacob Boehme in Germany, and of William Law in England, they maintain with these devout mystics, that creation in the sense of causing new existence is impossible. "Out of nothing, nothing can come forth." But this acknowledged axiom is here glaringly misconceived and misapplied. Suppose at any moment in the past, universal nonentity and nothing but nonentity, it must then be inconceivable that anything could ever begin to exist. No cause, no reason, no ground for such beginning could ever arise or be conceived. But this bears no application to the acknowledged facts of the universe. We all in common conceive in the past, not nonentity but an Eternal and Almighty Being, and with this, the whole basis of our conceptions is at once immeasurably altered. We have thus a real and deep ground, a true cause, an Infinite Power, on which to plant our faith. And the sole question is, can the Almighty cause to exist wholly new existence other than His own? At the least, there is no lack of presumption in venturing to pronounce that he cannot. How shall we ascertain the limit of Almighty Power? How shall we fathom and determine His resources?

Unquestionably, there are impossibilities even to God, here are, as all admit, manifest physical impossibilities, and there are as manifest moral impossibilities. No power could make a circle the same thing as a triangle, or a twelve-inch rod precisely the same length as a six-inch rod. On the other hand, God could not make a real truth at the same time a manifest error. God could not make essential vice to be essential virtue. These

things are clear impossibilities, and lie beyond and far outside of the sphere of physical and moral power. But can it be shown, in the same way, that creation, causing new and other existence, is also impossible and contradictory? We ask in vain for proof, and are met only by a repetition of mere assumptions without a shadow of proof. "Out of nothing, nothing can come forth." "That which now exists can only have been formed out of that which existed before." "God is the sole eternal substance, and all which we distinguish as the creation must have been moulded and constituted out of that one substance." That is to say, a portion of the Eternal essence has been somehow made susceptible of endless transformations, conversions, and even deteriorations, and thus has become the finite universe of matter and of mind.

These assertions are made with the utmost confidence, but they are mere assertions, and wholly unsupported. One is astonished and almost indignant when, as if it bore on the question and determined it finally, the same idea is given forth in an altered form—"God cannot convert nothing into something, and cannot bring something out of nothing." Certainly He cannot. The words as they stand are sheer absurdity, and no sane man ever put them together, save as a careless and inaccurate mode of conveying the idea of a real creation. Nothing is nothing, and only nothing for ever and ever. Nothing is neither a material which may be formed into something else, nor a place out of which something may be produced. But the position is untouched, that the Almighty can cause to exist, that which in no sense and in no form existed before, that He can call forth, by His Almighty

will, absolutely new existence, other than His own. A creature can only act on materials ready to his hand, the Creator first gives existence to the materials, on which His agency may be employed.

But the assertion is repeated, and with stronger emphasis, creation is impossible in itself. No ground, no reason, no proof of any kind is advanced, but the assertion is repeated as if it were self-evident and unanswerable. Creation, causing strictly new existence, is impossible and incredible. It is granted that we never witnessed a creation, it is not a thing which comes within the range of observation or experience. It is granted besides that our minds are wholly unable to compass it in thought, to take it in, to lay complete hold on it with the grasp of our intellect. It is strictly incomprehensible and yet most thoroughly credible. Creation belongs to a not small class of what are acknowledged to be great and vital truths. Several of the most precious verities to which we cling defy our comprehension. Eternity transcends our loftiest thought; it is beyond, and for ever beyond, our grasp, but it is true, and real, and grand, and we know and believe assuredly that the Eternal is. Uncreated Being also can never be compressed within the limit of finite thought; but it is a truth, and we believe it. God as self-existence, necessary existence, is incomprehensible but entirely believable. What God is, He is necessarily and eternally, simply because He is the Self-existent. Change in Him could only mean His ceasing to be what He is, the Self-existent, Uncreated, Immutable God. So much on the one side.

On the other side, the contradictions are fearful, are

tremendous, which are necessarily involved in the idea that a portion of the eternal substance was converted into something else. Virtually it amounts to the statement that that which is infinite becomes finite; that that which is eternal becomes temporal; that that which is uncreated becomes a creature; and that all perishing, fallible, finite, and sinful beings are virtually composed and constituted of the Divine essence. This is not incomprehensible merely, it is impossible, monstrous, and blasphemous. The doctrine of creation, on the other hand, though, like much besides in the region of the Divine, it transcends our power of comprehension, commends itself as true to reason and conscience. The Almighty God caused to exist wholly new being, which in no sense and in no form existed before. An infinite God and a finite universe, the product of His creative will, both are alike though not equally incomprehensible, but they are not contradictory.

This is our strong and unassailable ground—the idea of creation in the strict and highest sense, though incomprehensible by a finite mind, is in no sense or degree contradictory. It has never yet been shown to be contradictory. It stands wholly apart from all our observation and experience; but it is not at variance with them, and not opposed to them. It is not opposed to any single fact of experience or to any legitimate deduction from experience, or to any principle or conclusion of reason. Like much besides, in the sphere of the Divine, it is beyond and above our comprehension; but it is not contradictory, and therefore not impossible. And if it be only not impossible, it must be true, for it offers the only credible ground on which the facts of the universe

can be interpreted. Either creation is a reality, and the Eternal One has caused, produced, strictly created, all other existence, or all that now exists, as to its essence or substance, is everlasting and independent. If there be a single atom not eternal, the creation of this involves all the difficulty and incomprehensibility of the creation of a universe. That difficulty is not one of quantity, of degree, but of kind. Creation at all, not its extent, but creation, to any extent, that is, causing wholly new and other existence, constitutes the entire difficulty here. The alternative is between these two things, wholly new existence caused by the Eternal "One," or the absolute eternity of every atom of substance which now exists. An eternal mass, *materies*, stuff, other than the Great Being, out of which all we behold has been formed, only complicates and multiplies instead of relieving difficulty. That which is eternal is by the same token Divine. We should have thus two Gods, both alike Divine, the one irrational, unconscious, inert, subject to another who models and fashions it, at His pleasure. The eternity of matter, of the stuff out of which the universe is formed, involves contradictions direct and numberless, which it would outrage reason to admit. Creation, on the other hand—causing absolutely new and other existence—reason has no alternative but to accept. Mysterious, incomprehensible as it is, it must be true. It is the only non-contradictory solution of the facts of the universe.

Once, the universe, as we speak, was not, "The Eternal" existed alone. We strive to go back in thought, to Being, Absolute, Unconditioned Being. Continental philosophy professes to take this as its starting-point, and

to evolve the universe consequentially from its primitive centre. But the starting-point has ever been an assumption: that which is first, in reality, is the last which we reach. Profoundly the German mind has speculated on the subject of ontology, and not ingloriously, if we regard the living, lustrous, mighty thoughts to which it has given birth, but how vainly, if we look to the sober and solid determination of the life and death questionings of the human soul. In the region into which we are now daring to pierce, the eternal past, when the Supreme existed alone, we are met by that first axiom of the Hegelian philosophy, "Das Seyn ist das Nichts," Being is nothing.* With instinctive horror, we shrink back from the merciless paradox—the blasphemy. But the words have a kind of meaning, nevertheless. "Das Seyn," mere, bare† being, and nothing, are comparable thus far; both are certainly unconditioned. Mere, bare being, empty of all qualities and attributes whatsoever (if the absurdity may for a moment be put into language), an idea, an abstraction, no reality, is in every sense unconditioned. Nonentity also is unconditioned, necessarily, ludicrously unconditioned. But here—omitting very much besides—is the atrocious fallacy; in the very act of striving to conceive it, we convert nothing into something. It is unconditioned, simply because it is nothing,

* Die Lehre vom Seyn, § 87, Seite 99, Encyclopädie. Heidelberg, 1827.

† That wild, absurd abstraction, "Das Seyn," mere, bare being, mere existing and no more, devoid of all qualities whatsoever, except the single one, of existing, is the sheerest phantom of logic gone mad. It is inconceivable, impossible, a mere abstraction, not a reality, never a reality.

and in joining with it any qualifying term, we instantly condition and destroy it. It is nothing, has nothing, no substance, no qualities, and admits of no definition, no conception even.

But Eternal Being—which it is impossible to conceive as unconditioned "ab intra"—is reality, the truest and awfulest reality; and just because it is, and eternally was, reality, real being with real attributes, it never was, and never could be, unconditioned "ab intra." Before creation, alone in eternity, it was necessarily unconditioned "ab extra"—it was unconditioned Infinity. But it is not therefore a negative, but a positive; Infinity is the highest positive, and finity is the true negative, though it be verbally and grammatically positive. Infinity is the everlasting positive. Being, eternal, alone, before creation, is infinite self-consciousness and self-government, having, not nothing, but a real nature, as its sphere. It is eternal reason, not as a slumbering potentiality, but as an infinite activity, ranging through an inner domain, inexhaustible in possessions and in powers, the dwelling of infinite truth and infinite excellence.

The attempt is worse than vain to conceive of creation as an eternal, rather than a temporal, act. The idea is as old as Aristotle,—perhaps as Plato. Certainly the followers of Plato broadly asserted it, if he did not. Eternal creation must mean an eternal act, either springing out of a necessity in the Divine Nature, or an Eternal and voluntary emanation. In either case, it is self-contradictory, precisely of the same character and kind as eternal succession or eternal change. Creation is an act, and, as such, presupposes an actor prior to itself.

And then again, if the act of creation were eternal, the thing created must, on the same ground, be eternal also. In other words, the materials of the universe must be eternal, and we have to resign ourselves once more to all the contradictions from which the doctrine of creation is the legitimate and the only escape. Eternal creation, like eternal succession, is a contradiction in terms.

Creation is not and cannot be eternal, but its date, whether earlier or later, we have no means of determining. One thing is certain, let it have occurred sixty thousand ages, or sixty thousand myriads of ages, or sixty thousand times sixty thousand myriads of ages ago, the difference is not even as the dust in the balance. In sober truth, there is no difference, and there can be none. But creation, whensoever realised, is alike absolutely separated from the all-encompassing, indivisible, Eternal One, who has no beginning, no end, no parts, and to whom it can never be either near or remote, to whom indeed, in its special being and mode, alike, it can bear no resemblance whatever, but must abide for ever an essentially other and separate thing. On the one hand, the all-encompassing eternal is, ever was, and ever will be alone, unchangeable, untouched, unreached by creation. On the other hand, the creation is, in its sphere, also perfectly alone, apart, wholly "sui generis." It is, for the first time, in the universe, a beginning, when before there was never a beginning. It is the beginning of a new mode of existence, and of a new series of existences; it is the source and the scene of changes, when, ever before, no change was possible; and it is the only scene of changes, for to the Eternal Necessary Existence

change is contradiction, would be destruction. Creation is the beginning of space, introducing an order of existences to which, for the first time, the relations of magnitude and number are possible. It is the beginning of time, introducing an order of existences whose duration is limitable and measurable. It is the beginning of all derived, dependent, finite being.

The creation, in all its parts, and as a whole, stands essentially and infinitely removed from the Eternal Self-existent Being, its Author. Between these two there can only be for ever a measureless separation. Pantheism is not a mere fallacy, it is an absurdity, merging the Creator in the creation, and making Him not a separate, still less an independent, existence, but The All. The All are God and God is The All. Or otherwise, there is an Eternal Substans, a Substratum, One sole Personality, and all else is but the successive and varying manifestations of the One Personality. The true doctrine of creation shows that both of these, alike, are impossible and self-contradictory, a palpable confounding of the infinite with the finite, of the eternal with the temporal.

And here fidelity demands that marked exception be taken to the language if not the views of Cousin on this great subject. One who, with Hamilton, long stood pre-eminent among European philosophers, and who, in his day, did noble service to the cause of advanced cultivation, deserves the deepest reverence. But at least the language which Cousin employs must be reprobated, because it is undoubtedly susceptible of a mischievous interpretation, and to ordinary minds, in its obvious meaning, it seems to support an error which he has else-

where disavowed. He was no Pantheist. Again and again he is found maintaining unequivocally that God is cause, and the universe effect; that God is the Infinite Cause, and the universe a finite effect, and that the two are therefore absolutely and for ever separate. But what is the meaning of these words, "God creates? he creates in virtue of his creative power, and he draws the universe not from nonentity, but from Himself, who is Absolute Existence. His distinguishing characteristic being an absolute creative force, which cannot but pass into act, it follows, not that the creation is possible, but that it is necessary; it follows that, since God is creating ceaselessly and infinitely, creation is inexhaustible and sustains itself perpetually."* We do not refer to that necessity, which is here represented as governing God in creating, though it is difficult to dissociate this from a denial of liberty to the Divine Agent. The accomplished American translator of Cousin's Critique of Locke, Dr. Henry, of New York University,† maintains that all the necessity, for which M. Cousin argues, is a necessity relative to our conceptions only, while the Infinite Cause is personally altogether free. But what can the words mean, "God draws the universe, not from nonentity but from Himself, who is Absolute

* "Dieu crée donc: il crée en vertu de sa puissance créatrice, il tire le monde, non du néant qui n'est pas, mais de lui-même qui est l'existence absolue. Son caractère éminent étant une force créatrice absolue qui ne peut pas ne pas passer à l'acte, il suit non que la création est possible, mais qu'elle est nécessaire: il suit que Dieu créant sans cesse et infiniment, la création est inépuisable et se maintient constamment."—*Cours de Philol., Leçon Ve.* Paris, 1828.

† Preface, p. 13.

Existence?" In Himself there can be only Divinity. From Himself He can draw only Divinity. Is not this to make the universe divine, creation the Uncreated, the All but a modification and manifestation of "The One?" This surely can be distinguished by no name more appropriate than Pantheism.

It is perilous, and always vain, to speculate on the act of creation and its mode; the attempt to render it comprehensible is suicidal; for ever, as belonging to a region "sui generis," the conception must be for us impossible. There are no analogies, not the most distant approach to a likeness, not the faintest glimmer of light in any direction, to guide or help our minds. The fact of creation stands absolutely solitary. The very utmost that can be said is no more than this, and it is next to nothing, that there are some things in our mental experience which, so far as they reach, in the way of remote illustration, are not without value. Our thoughts and volitions are, in a modified sense, of our creating.* They are real entities, which had no previous existence till they were called into being by our minds. But it cannot escape us, that not only the occasions, but the materials of our thoughts and volitions, are furnished almost wholly from without. Locke has instanced a fact (if such it be), which has the advantage of bringing creation, as a Divine act, near to our present experience, and of presenting it, not in the remote past, but literally realised every hour,—the fact of the constant production of human souls. As it respects matter, creation is, to our

* Cousin: Cours de l'Histoire de la Philosophie, tom. ii. pp. 129—143.

conception, only past. There are endless changes and transformations in material nature; but, so far as our knowledge and observation reach, there is no new creation of a single particle. We have no evidence, even no indication, and can therefore have no belief of such a thing. But there must be a never-ceasing creation of human souls. "That frame of particles (he is speaking of the human body) is not you, it makes not that thinking thing you are . . . . therefore, when did that thinking being begin to be? If it did never begin to be, then have you always been a thinking thing from eternity; the absurdity whereof I need not confute till I meet with one who is so void of understanding as to own it. If, therefore, you can allow a thinking thing to be made out of nothing, as all things that are not eternal must be, why also can you not allow it possible for a material being to be made out of nothing, by an equal power, but that you have the experience of the one in view, and not of the other? Though, when well considered, creation of a spirit will be found to require no less power than the creation of matter. Nay, possibly, if we would emancipate ourselves from vulgar notions, and raise our thoughts as far as they would reach to a closer contemplation of things, we might be able to aim at some dim and seeming conception how matter might at first be made and begin to exist, by the power of that Eternal First Being; but to give beginning and being to a spirit would be found a more inconceivable effect of omnipotent power."*

Whatever may be thought of the philosophy of this entire passage, the estimate of conceivableness at least is

* Essay on Hum. Under. book IV. chap. x. p. 18.

very questionable ; the ground on which it is supported is not exhibited, and there are some obvious circumstances that strongly favour quite the opposite conclusion. Created minds bear a resemblance to the Creating Mind : matter does not. For ever, the distinction is measureless, between the Infinite and the finite. But created minds, like the Uncreated, are spiritual, rational, and moral, and their nature and their attributes are thus far allied to those of the Eternal. The act of creation—causing wholly new existence—is utterly incomprehensible by us ; and perhaps it is idle to talk of degrees of incomprehensibility. But were the notion of gradation admissible, we should maintain that the creation of minds which bear a certain likeness to God was less difficult to conceive than the creation of matter which is so far removed in its nature from the Creator. If we dared to speculate on such a subject, we should imagine the earliest creations in the universe to have been creations of spirits, finite likenesses of the Self-existent. Perhaps the first cycles of time, vast in their stretch, beyond our power to imagine, measured the duration of myriads of pure and noble souls. Perhaps the creation of matter was a far later manifestation of Infinite Power, when beings of a compound nature were summoned into existence, endowed with organs and faculties, to which this new product was adapted. Whensoever it was, we are ready to grant, to any who put forward this difficulty, that the creation of matter is more, not less, inconceivable by us, than the creation of mind. The essential properties and powers of matter are opposite, " toto genere," to those of mind ;

and from the Eternal Mind this form of derived being must stand yet more entirely distinct.

It has been argued that the effect cannot possess qualities which are not in the cause, and since the effect, in this instance, is material, either the cause must be material also; or otherwise, if the Supreme be purely spiritual, matter can be no creation of His, but must have existed eternally. The fundamental mistake here is very obvious. It is admitted that the effect can never exceed the cause, can never possess what the cause has not power to impart; but it is distinctly denied that the effect which usually is, can only be a form or mode of the cause. In this case a finite creation, whether matter or mind, were absolutely impossible. It would follow, that an infinite cause could produce only an infinite effect, and finity anywhere would be an express contradiction and absurdity. But it is not necessary that the effect should be of the same nature with the cause. It is necessary that there should be in the cause power sufficient to produce the effect, but this is all that is absolutely necessary. The only question, therefore, here is, Has "The Eternal" power, strictly, to create, to produce that mode of being which we call matter? Is the creation of matter, of visible, palpable existence, impossible? Does it involve a contradiction? The creation of matter, as of mind, the creation of a single atom or a single soul is utterly incomprehensible, but it is not contradictory. To no fact or conclusion of experience, and to no principle of reason, is it contradictory; not being contradictory, it is possible to One who is Infinite; and being possible, it is certainly true, because it affords the only

rational solution of existing facts. Matter unintelligent, unconscious, brute matter cannot be eternal, that is, Divine,—a second, other God. This is directly contradictory and impossible. The oldest, the primitive form of Being, is mind, the exhaustless fount of all other being. Mind, the One Reigning Mind, is Eternal and Infinite. All else is created, dependent, finite.

CHAPTER II.

THE KINGDOM OF MATTER.

UNCREATED AND CREATED.—FIRST RELATIONSHIP.—CREATING AND GOVERNING, THEIR CONNECTION.—ALMIGHTY AGENCY, A NECESSITY.—PHYSICAL LAWS.—WILL IN COMBINATION WITH POWER.—GOD'S UNIVERSAL PRESENCE AND WORKING.—"THE ONE" REIGNING OVER ALL.

THEIR RELATIONS.

THE Uncreated is separated immeasurably from the creation, but the two are connected, intimately and indissolubly connected, and we have the highest proof of the reality of this fact, though we are incapable of comprehending its mode. They stand in the relation of cause and effect; the Power and Will of the Uncreated gave existence to the creation. This moment it was not; the Eternal was alone; beside Him there was only the illimitable non-being. The next moment the creation was; absolutely new and other being, not composed out of pre-existing materials, not formed out of the substance of God, a portion of His nature, an impartation from within, but another and new existence, solely and wholly the product of His creative volition, and therefore belonging to Him inalienably, His property by a right of tenure absolutely unparalleled—of which no analogy exists, or can exist—His property, because wholly and only His product.

But is there no connection between the created and the Uncreated beyond that which is involved in the solitary fact of creation? Did the connection terminate as it began, with an event which belongs to the unapproachable past? Once, ages ago, too remote to be

calculated, Divine Volition and Divine Power were put forth. Since that unascertainable moment have they reposed evermore? Matter, with its forces and laws, mind, with its susceptibilities and capacities, sprang forth at the bidding of the Supreme. Were they, then, for ever abandoned to themselves—the Creator resting, as from the unbeginning eternity, in the infinite sufficiency of His own Being; and they, having received their original commission, forthwith fulfilling it, pursuing a fixed, inevitable path of self-development, without oversight, interest, or control of any kind on the part of the Great Maker?

Perhaps, the universe with all its materials, and properties, and powers, having been called into existence, a continued Divine working in it is unnecessary, and therefore not to be presumed. Perhaps many of its operations are so minute, and so insignificant, that it would degrade the Infinite Majesty to be connected with them, or even cognizant of them. Perhaps the events which have taken place in our world, and which are taking place every hour, are of such a nature that it would be fatal to the character of the Supreme Being if His hand were in any way concerned in them. Perhaps there is such an amount of crime and of suffering here, such disorder and tumult, that His unsullied purity and untroubled serenity could no longer be believed, if He took a constant part in human affairs.

On grounds like these it is concluded, that the Great Being is altogether apart from the universe, in His active power, His volitions, His affections, and almost His observation. Beyond its first creation, and its various endowment at its creation, He has had no connection

with it. Since that moment, His personal agency has never been put forth in it, and as He is for ever unreached by all its changes, so He is for ever uninterested in them.

The common, popular argument against the presumption of a universe deserted by its Maker, is, so far, conclusive and satisfactory. On no valid ground can it be pronounced degrading for Him to act in that, however apparently insignificant, which it did not degrade Him to create. In the minutest and meanest of created things, there lie the intelligible traces of power and wisdom, and even goodness. The All-Seeing looks not with shame, but with serene complacency, on the workmanship of his hands, and beholds a glory, not hidden even from our imperfect vision, in the infinitely little, as well as in the magnificently grand. Nor is the thought remote, that what we call the trivial, are so constantly mixed up with the more important operations and changes of nature, so identified with them, so essential to them, and do so often constitute their very source and cause, that either there is no positive Divine action in nature at all, or that action must be universal. It is impossible that it should be limited to what we distinguish as the grander and more significant movements.

As for the dark, moral aspects of the universe,—the suffering, the tumult, and the crime,—these will come under review at another stage of our inquiries; in the meantime it is enough to say that they are in no way illuminated, by denying an actual Divine providence. The Most High must at least be cognizant of them,

unless we refuse to him the attribute of Omniscience; and were it possible for them to disturb His serenity, or to affect His character, this result would be as inseparable from the mere observation of them, as from a direct agency in human affairs. This world could not become less God's creation, by His merely forsaking it, however utterly. He may or He may not take part in its affairs; but in whatever sense its evils bear upon His character, that is determined as completely by the act of creation, as by the continued agency of providence. It is even quite possible that providence, instead of more deeply implicating The Holy One, may be the efficient instrument of mitigating the evils, which, without blame in the Creator, have arisen in the creation; an idea, we hope to show, which admits of the most abundant confirmation. One hypothesis remains—that the universe, with its materials and properties and powers, once existing, a continued presence and working of God are not needed, and therefore are not to be supposed.

In meeting this hypothesis, so far as it touches a physical in distinction from a spiritual providence, it is necessary to refer to the true meaning of the expression, forces and laws * of matter. When we speak of mechanical, chemical, and physiological laws, as governing

* Men of science, as such, convey by the word law nothing more than the invariableness of certain phenomena, without at all touching the question of causality. But it is open to us to show, as is here attempted, what this invariableness of phenomena necessarily involves, and that it is wholly inexplicable and even inconceivable, except in the deep ground of an intelligent, voluntary, and Almighty agency. We are besides entitled to say, that scientific men have no right to use a word already occupied, and to leave out the chief idea which in all other cases it invariably involves.

certain classes of phenomena, the idea conveyed is, that matter in certain circumstances is found to undergo certain changes, and that everywhere and always it is found to undergo the same changes, the circumstances being the same. But the ground of this constancy is said to be law: that is, the result is not a caprice, not a contingency, not an uncertainty; but is owing to a fixed order, to some distinct, determinate, inviolable arrangement. But we are entitled to ask, by whom is the order fixed, and whose is the supposed arrangement? The word law and the thought of which it is the sign refer back to an origin and an author. The word contains at least two ideas, will and power. A law (if the word be really meant for anything, and be not a mere blind to our ignorance) suggests first, expressed will, and second, power to enforce the will. If the well-established conclusion of science be that all the operations and changes of matter are invariable, and to our apprehension necessary; indicating no such thing as contingency, irregularity, caprice; when it is added that this is their law, the real meaning, if there be a real meaning at all in the words, is this, that some will chooses and resolves, and that some power secures that it shall be so. The earth, the mineral and the metal, the solid, the liquid and the gas, the inorganic and the organic substance, the vegetable and the animal, all, as we speak, have their fixed laws, in perfect harmony with which they never fail to act; that is to say, if the language have any meaning, every one of them, in all its changes, evinces the presence of an unalterable will and an irresistible power. But, as distinctly, the will and the power are not theirs, and cannot

be contained in them, but must and can only belong to a Being.

That unknown substratum, on which the laws of nature terminate, and all whose forms and products are simply the various effects of the operation of these laws, has no will, and not less certainly it has, in itself, no power. For example, our globe has a motion upon its own axis, and it has, also, another motion around the sun; on the one hand, there is a principle, in virtue of which it is ever repelled from the central orb; and, on the other hand, there is a principle, in virtue of which it is ever drawn in exactly the contrary direction, and the result is, a nearly circular orbit. This is the law, as we speak, of the earth and the sun. But the only intelligible meaning is that some Being wills that the two should thus act and re-act on one another, and that this Being has power to secure that they shall thus act and re-act. There is no visible being, to whom this will and power can be referred. Logically, rationally, may I add scientifically, we are compelled to refer them to an Unseen, even if He were also an unknown Being. No sane man imagines that there is a consciousness, still less a volition, in the earth or in the sun. They have no purpose and no choice in their movements. The will, the purpose, must be in an intelligent Being, altogether and only in Him. And precisely in like manner, the force (as we speak) that on the one side attracts, and on the other side resists, is not, cannot be, in the sun, or in the earth. Is the sun a free agent of himself, exerting a certain virtue inherent in his personality, and by this, affecting the earth in a particular manner? Power is that which, through the medium of

its possessor, produces, originates, causes change. But a real causer of change, a free actor, without volition, without even consciousness, is a contradiction. The power (the ability to cause change) whereby the sun attracts the earth, can be only in a person, not in a thing. The Creator has so willed it, and His causative power secures that it shall be done. This is the only intelligible or even possible interpretation of the law of the earth and the sun. At this moment, when the phenomenon is presented to us, not ages ago, and at every moment when the phenomenon is presented, The Creator wills it, and His power effects it.*

The idea of the Almighty impressing a law upon the sun and the earth at their creation, which thereafter abides in force, and under which they of themselves must for ever continue to act, is a pure fancy imposing upon us by sounds, which on examination are found to have no intelligible significance. If the law be regarded as His announced will or purpose, neither the sun nor the earth is capable of understanding the announcement, or of retaining the knowledge of it. They cannot receive a command, and cannot obey it. The volition or purpose of the Divine Mind cannot be contained within them, and cannot be imparted to them. In like manner, power, in the sense of ability to originate change, is incapable of being conveyed to them, still less of being

* It must be borne in mind, that we have here nothing to do with the doctrine of eternal succession or eternal necessity. We argue on the presupposition of Creation and a Creator. These granted, we seek to show what they necessarily involve, and how the phenomena of the universe are to be interpreted in consistency with them.

retained by them; they can never become actors, originators, conscious senders forth of influence from themselves. Power, conscious voluntary activity, is in a person only, not in unconscious matter. The Supreme can make use of the earth or the sun to do what He judges fit. He can cause them to act on one another as He pleases; He can determine and secure that they shall invariably act in one way, so that we shall understand that this is His fixed law. But the meaning is, that at every moment when they so act, He is the direct, present, immediate, sole Causer. The laws of nature can mean nothing more or other than the will of the Almighty, the course which He wills and empowers nature to take. They have, and can have, no existence except in the mind of God. They are not in nature, there is no "locus in quo" for them except in a mind. And precisely in like manner the powers and forces of nature have no existence except in Him. They are attributes of a being, not of a thing. Certain changes are produced, and we rightly argue, that there must be a producer, but a producer, a real causer of change, is a person, not a thing.

The whole course of material nature, in its minutest and in its grandest departments, is nothing else than The Supreme acting, directly, immediately acting. There is a substance, a material (be it what it may) on which and through which He acts—and this also was created by Him—but at every moment, everywhere, He is the direct, the immediately present, the sole Actor. The will, the purpose, and the power that are evinced are in Him and in Him only. In this light, science is emphatically the record of Divine, physical providence; it is the discovery

and the announcement of that fixed course, according to which the Great Being has chosen to act, in all the spheres of material nature. "A law," says Dr. Whewell, "supposes an agent and a power; for it is the mode, according to which the agent proceeds, the order according to which the power acts. Without the presence of such an agent, of such a power, conscious of the relations on which the law depends, producing the effects which the law prescribes, the law can have no efficacy, no existence. Hence we infer, that the intelligence by which the law is ordained, the power by which it is put into action, must be present, at all times and in all places, where the effects of the law occur; that thus the knowledge and the agency of the Divine Being pervade every portion of the universe, producing all action and passion, all permanence and change. The laws of matter are the laws which he, in his wisdom, prescribes to his own acts; his universal presence is the necessary condition of any course of events; his universal agency, the only organ of any efficient force."*

This point admits of a more profound, perhaps a still more satisfying, exposition. In denying the reality of a physical providence, the necessity of a continual and direct Divine working in the material universe, the distinction between the Creator and the created, is lost sight of. "The Eternal One," and He alone, is Self-existent and absolutely Independent; His Being is its own ground, and out of itself needs and has no ground of existence. We can give no account of it, except that it is, ever was, ever will be, ever must be, cannot but be. The material universe,

* Astronomy and General Physics, p. 361.

on the other hand, is altogether dependent. It began. At the will of the Creator, it began. He caused it to exist, produced it by His mere power. The reason, the sole reason, of its existence, lies in His will and power. It became, and it was what it was, because He willed it, and for no other reason whatever. The ground, the foundation on which it stood was this only. It had no reason of existence, in itself. But having once existed, can it then, must it then of itself continue to exist, unless the Creator expressly will that it shall not? Does a thing once created, that is, a thing the sole cause and ground of whose first being is in God, thereafter become self-existent and independent? Having received being, is it then able to sustain itself, has it then a reason, a ground in itself for continuing in being? Does it need only the fact that it exists, to insure that it shall continue to exist, unless some positive exercise of power be put forth to destroy it?

Nothing can be more decisive than the answer with which these questions must be met. It is impossible even for God to impart independence, that is, self-existence, for a single moment, to a single created thing. The reason, the ground for the created, in all the varieties which this term comprehends, the cause of its first being, the sole cause, is contained in the Almighty will and power. On the very same principle, the cause, the sole cause of its continuing to be, at any moment afterwards, is contained in that same Almighty will and power. Just because it is created and not uncreated, it can never be self-existent for an instant. The Supreme cannot communicate the attribute of self-existence; for

this would be to create uncreated substance. The reason, the ground of the existence of the universe, of every single atom at every moment, is not in itself but wholly and only in the will and power of the Creator. It is nothing, has no meaning, no reality, no being, except in Him. Underneath it and in it, sustaining it, entirely causing it, are the Almighty will and the Almighty power. Let these be withdrawn for a moment, let them only not be, that is, let there be no present Divine volition, and no present exertion of Divine power, and that moment it is nothing, for the sole ground of its being is gone.

So far from God being able to abandon the universe (having once created it) to a course of independent self-development, his direct agency is not less necessary every moment, to the very being of the minutest atom, than it was in the act of creation itself. Whether we refer to matter or to mind, there can be self-existence, independence, only in "The Uncreated." Of mind and matter it is equally true, that the sole ground of its continuing to be as of its beginning at any single moment to be is in the Almighty will and the Almighty power directly put forth; and hence, throughout the entire sphere of creation, direct Divine agency is a universal, a constant, a profound reality. Strictly speaking, there is no agent in nature but one, that is the Creator. In the flowing river and the restless ocean—in the waving plain and the solitary flower—in the gentle and the stormy wind—in the falling rain and the noiseless dew—in the beams of light and in the diffusion of heat—in all the activities of inorganic substance and of vegetable and of animal matter, it is verily "The Supreme" we behold—"The Supreme"

acting. In the spring time of the year, when the earth grows green, and sends up its wondrous life, and fields and woods and hills are clothed with beauty, it is "The Supreme" acting, we behold. When, again, the produce of the earth is cut down, and by-and-by is gathered up, a munificent provision for man and beast,—or when the snows of winter cover, and its frosts harden, the soil so lately clad with verdure and laden with abundance,—or when we think of the changing seasons of the year, produced by the revolutions of our planet around the sun,—or when we turn to the myriads of planets, stars, suns, and systems that replenish space, and reflect on their mighty and complicated movements, and on the vast harmony that reigns throughout,—in all, it is "The Supreme" acting, we behold. His will and His power are the only real forces in Nature. Everywhere there is a present God, acting not at random, but by law, law which Himself has ordained, acting on principle and with fixed design. There is a plan in His working, a distinct and by us discoverable plan; it is based on order and law,—an extended and harmonious system of laws. There is a physical providence as certainly as there is a Creator. The Great Being has not only given existence to a universe, but he makes godlike provision for all its interests and needs. He sees forward, and his far-seeing eye connects the end with the beginning. His agency is a vast, complicated, but harmonious whole, throughout which we trace not only one Mighty Hand, but one Unerring Mind. There is a glorious unity in all the multiplicity and variety of mechanical, chemical, and physiological phenomena on our earth. And our earth

is but a fragment of the mightier unity of the material creation. The real, ceaseless acting of "The Supreme" throughout creation is as certain as His Being. Physical providence is all but a fact of science; it is so direct an inference, that it may almost be classed with its established discoveries. How far beyond this, the Divine working extends,—whether there be a moral as well as a physical providence, and how much is comprehended within the sphere of moral providence,—is yet to be ascertained.

CHAPTER III.

THE KINGDOM OF SPIRIT.

PHENOMENA OF MIND AND OF MATTER.—DISORDER OF MORAL WORLD.—NO HUMAN PLAN.—PLAN OF GOD.—INTELLIGENCE REIGNING.—MORAL LAWS.—PROGRESSIVE DEVELOPMENT.—NOT DIRECT.—REALISATION.—DESTINY OF MAN.—HUMAN AND DIVINE AGENCY.—HOW COMBINED.

NECESSARY DISTINCTION.

PHYSICALLY considered, mind not less than matter needs the mighty and constant support of the Supreme; and for its continued being, as for its first existence, there are demanded His immediate will and power, and, except in these, it has no ground of existence for a moment. But there is a clear distinction between matter and mind as it respects even this kind of dependence. Matter is a thing, not a person, has no consciousness, no volition, is not an actor, and cannot contain, cannot put forth, power. It is acted upon, and is the medium through which agency may be conducted, but it, itself, cannot act. The forces of nature are literally and only the power of The Supreme, exerted through the medium of nature, the various material modes in which He chooses to exert His power. But a human mind is a person, a conscious, voluntary being, strictly an actor, a causer of change. All its power is derived and dependent, but it possesses it nevertheless. Its faculties of thinking, feeling, and willing are in it, not in its Maker; they are its real attributes, of which, as belonging to it, it is distinctly conscious. And these faculties, besides, are under its control, at its command, so that it can put them forth or not, according to its pleasure. It, itself, from itself, on its own grounds,

can act, can originate, can strictly cause. Its actings and changes are produced by a power in it, which it consciously exerts, and can also consciously withhold.

In the region of mind we are introduced to an essentially different class of facts, from those which are presented to us by the unconscious and involuntary phenomena of material nature. The thoughts, the reasonings, the conclusions, the principles, the motives, the feelings, the purposes, and the actions of human beings are their own and belong to them, and are produced by them in a sense which has no counterpart in material objects and their changes. There is a world quite apart from material nature, a spiritual world, the human soul, and it is distinguished by attributes that are altogether new and peculiar to itself—intelligence, conscience, affection, and volition—all of which are powers properly belonging to it, not to God. There is in it an originative force, which is, indeed, derived and dependent, but is nevertheless real. It is conferred by the Supreme, and is every moment sustained only by his Almighty will; but, so long as it is continued, it is the conscious possession of men, and is put forth, controlled, and entirely governed by them. That inner world, clothed with a bodily form and encompassed by the outer material universe of beings and things, is now before us. We look through the outward lives of men, and in, to the hidden formative principles of their lives; we behold men acting towards themselves and towards others, in wisdom or in folly, usefully or injuriously, according or contrary to the law of right; and we distinguish, on the one hand, their excellences and virtues, and, on the other hand, their vices. Their deeds and

their words reveal both—vice often insinuating itself among the virtues, and virtue often not altogether wanting, even in their vices.

The spiritual history of our world—man in his personal, social, political, and divine relations—is full of mysterious interest, repellent and yet attractive, as a subject of thought. We look on the products of human piety, genius, taste, and industry, the effects resulting from human principles or passions, from the mingled good and evil influences which man suffers to act upon him. We behold these products and effects now on a limited and again on a more extended sphere, now spread over all the past, and again rising up from all the present. The spectacle is in great part deeply distressing. How shall we connect with it an actual and pervading Divine agency? In material nature, it is impossible to fail in discovering harmony and order, but in the region of intellectual, and especially of moral activities, the sphere of right and wrong, of virtue and vice, it is impossible to deny all but universal confusion. In the past and in the present, there lies before us a heterogeneous mass, collected, apparently, by no design, and which no assignable principle of analysis can resolve. It is not merely that men have been and are in great part a lawless, vicious, and suffering race of beings, but there is apparently no consistent plan in the moral world, no reigning principle, no fixed course of procedure, indicating the adaptation of means to a distinct and exalted end. We pause, for in such language as this the facts are overstated and falsified.

We cannot discover, indeed, in the moral history of the world any uniform determinate course which the race of

man has from the first resolved to take, and which has been faithfully pursued from age to age. It is most palpable that, at this moment, men of all nations and classes have no common ideas respecting the aim to which their spiritual and moral activities should be directed. Not less undeniable is it, that in no single age since the world began, have all men been thus at one in their ideas and aims. The notion of a primitive and universal plan of moral action among men, transmitted from age to age and adopted by each in succession, is a mere dream. But because there neither has been, nor is, any such design among human beings, is there therefore none such anywhere? Are there no reigning spiritual laws because men have not conceived and established them? And while in material nature Divine agency is direct, and constant, and universal, has that agency no place amidst all the phenomena of the spiritual world?

The idea is incompatible even with the attribute of intelligence. The Infinite Mind gave being to human minds, and must be more intimately related to them than to any other form of created existence. God is the Father of minds. It is inconceivable that the Creator, the Father, should have had no design in bringing them into existence,—that, having given them a being, he should have omitted to give them a destiny, and should have abandoned them, without control, to mere self-development, be the issue what it might to which that self-development should conduct. While, in the lower region of his dominions, all is manifest and mighty order, and the wisest ends are effected by the best adapted means, in this, the noblest part of his empire, is there nothing but wild

confusion, universal contingency and uncertainty, in which, to whatever it may at last conduct, there is no Divine purpose, as there is no Divine interposition? This would be utterly incompatible even with the attribute of intelligence. A wise being cannot act without design. The wisest of Beings cannot have acted without design. The Infinite Intelligence must have had an end, and one worthy of Himself, in the creation of human minds, and, if an end, must also have contemplated means no less worthy for accomplishing the end. Whether we be capable of discovering the end and of tracing out the means in their perfect adaptation, is not the question. But there must be—we argue it simply on the ground of the intelligence of the Great Being—there must be a Divine plan; and, if a plan, then also a distinct Divine agency in the spiritual, as in the material, world.

Amidst confusion, suffering, and crime, as it respects men, there must be method, order, and progress, as it respects God. Nor is it to be denied, that, wild as the disorder is which overspreads the moral history of our race, traces are discernible, however confused and faint, of reigning and righteous law. Into the current speech of men, into the common proverbs of nations, the evidence, not of a floating notion, but of a thorough conviction—the result of experience—has wrought itself. "Honesty is the best policy," is a special and not elevated application of a grand and universal truth, which men have long ago reached. It means this, and we all know it and believe it—"The Good alone are really happy." "Wrong-doers are always miserable." "Virtue is life, Vice is death." Startling and harassing

anomalies there may be; but, in the common belief of men, these principles are supreme in human affairs. Amidst the vast disorder certain paramount elements of order and of right are discoverable. And it is felt that a nearer, wider, and more enlightened observation would establish a far more extended sovereignty of law, than is apparent to casual and cursory thought.

Meantime, it is clear that the governing moral principles discoverable in our world, whatever be their number or their power, owe their origin, not to man but to the Supreme Guardian of immutable rectitude and truth. The question remains, to what is their operation directed? what is the ultimate end which they are working out? —is there a plan, and what is the plan, of moral providence? We cast back our thoughts on the ages of the past, as far as the historic period extends, and ask if, from the beginning onward till now, there are discernible traces of a continued path of God? Most certainly, men have had no common plan. But is there no plan of God, which His established laws have been furthering, and which He is bringing nearer and nearer to its perfect realisation? Is there evidence of progress from first to last, or is there not?

Progress in a direct line, in the moral history of the world, it is not possible to discover. The course of things seems often to have been circular rather than direct. They advance, reach a maximum point, and then not seldom appear to recede. It is quite capable of proof, that a later age, instead of being an advance on its predecessor, has sometimes been a manifest retrogression. A period of dense and continued darkness

has sometimes succeeded an age of comparative illumination. But if the path of the world has been described by circular lines, perhaps the circles have been in advance, the one of the other. The line has indeed often receded, but perhaps it has returned again, and not only touched its former maximum, but a new arc from a new centre has been commenced. Perhaps the centres of the successive circles have been in advance of one another; and a line drawn through these centres is a line of progress, not rapid, but, on the whole, sure and decided. The idea of the progressive elevation of Humanity, every intelligent and candid thinker cherishes with a profound faith. At this day, a larger surface of human society is illuminated, and the light is of a higher kind, penetrates more deeply, and is more thoroughly diffused, than at any previous period in the history of the world. In the development of intellect, of the moral nature, and of the social relations, in the diffusion through the masses of whatever truth in these directions is discovered, in the conversion of ascertained truth into guiding principle, and in its practical application to the purposes of life, in knowledge of the real wants of man and of the means of supplying them, and in vigorous efforts, nobly intended and often wise and well adapted, for bringing these means to bear, the world presents a condition at this moment incomparably in advance of any ever before attained. All serious and thoughtful persons, however widely they differ, are agreed in this,—that there is a great and good destiny, towards which the race of man is making its way. Each may impart to that destiny, the peculiar from and hue of his own

creed. But it is the settled conviction of all, that there is a luminous point towards which human things are converging, and that a day of light, of moral splendour, of liberty and of exalted blessedness, shall encompass our globe. There is and there must ever have been a settled plan in the moral, as in the material world. But nothing can be more manifest, than that the plan is not human. There has been no compact, no concert among men, and there is no such thing now, for carrying out this holy design. It is true that men have been the acting parties; so far as has been apparent to the eye, they have been the only acting parties. But the plan has been Heaven's alone; the great laws of the moral world, also, which have reigned in all its movements have been from above, and the entire machinery, by which whatever success is yet witnessed has been gained and by which perfect ultimate success shall be achieved, is Divine.

The reality of the continued and universal Divine working in the spiritual world is all which we now seek to establish. Its mode is quite another question, and one which opens up most profound, distressing, perhaps inexplicable difficulties. Men are the visible agents and instruments of moral providence, the only visible agents and instruments of moral providence. But the Eternal Being is the real, though unseen, Actor, and by means of human instrumentality He is carrying out His mighty plan. How are Divine and human working connected? Where does the one terminate and the other begin? How much in the movements of the spiritual world, is to be attributed to God, and how much to man?

This only, with our present means of judging, we are entitled to assert,—there is too much of disorder, and too much of evil, to allow the belief, that Divine will and power are alone at work in the activities of mind, as we know they are in the activities of matter. On the other hand, there is too evident a plan, a moral purpose and aim, in human affairs, and too evident a sovereignty of holy and mighty laws, for us to imagine that man alone is the worker in this sacred region. It may not be possible to our limited faculties, perfectly to reconcile the conflicting principles and phenomena of the moral world, the existence of evil with Divine working, and a determined plan with voluntary activity in man, but we will venture to inquire to what extent harmony is at least conceivable, and where the attempt to reconcile must—if it must—be abandoned.

PART THIRD.

GOD AND THE FACTS OF THE CREATION.

IN TWO CHAPTERS.

Chapter I. Physical and Moral Evil in the Light of Reason.

II. Physical and Moral Evil in the Light of Revelation.

HUMAN REASON, LIMITED.

THE teaching of philosophy and of theology alike is that beyond the utmost stretch of human reason there lies, and for ever must lie, the illimitable, the unknowable. In the unity of all truth, even that which we know, and know best, must stretch out in many of its relations, into this unapproachable region, and be there lost to our thought. Human powers of comprehension cannot compass the extent, and cannot take in all the fulness of eternal truth. The just effect of this persuasion is not to repress investigation, but, in a conviction of the necessary limitation of our faculties, to supply a new element, which, in concert with other principles, shall act as a guiding influence in all our researches, and especially in all our conclusions.

It is impossible, from the very nature of the subject, to exhibit, or even to discover, the perfect harmony, on all sides, between the phenomena of providence and the moral nature of the Supreme. God is "past finding out;" and shall we presume to judge what His acting, His reasons, His aims, must and ought to be? Must these, can these be all fathomable, measurable, explicable by us? Perhaps providence on our earth connects itself with providence in other regions of the universe; perhaps

Divine spiritual agency extends over a sphere inconceivably vast, embracing unknown worlds and peoples throughout immensity; perhaps the vast plan of providence is one, our earth forming an inconsiderable part in the mighty whole. Looking, as we do, only on a part, which may connect itself, in ten thousand ways, with that which is beyond our vision, and may only there receive its highest interpretation, shall we expect, in our fragment, nothing but what is perfectly comprehensible, harmonious, and luminous, to such beings as we are? Even were there no scene of God's spiritual working but our earth and its successive populations, how complicated, how intricate, how vast, and how far beyond our comprehension, must this be! How little even of this, is the most capacious human mind capable of taking in! A scheme which embraces the entire duration of the world, the countless successive generations of men, over all parts of the wide earth, all their interests, intellectual, moral, social, temporal, and immortal, all the relations of all events, and all their influences and all their results; a scheme, reposing in the uncreated Soul, of whose motives, whose grounds, and whose mighty ultimate purpose, that Soul alone is cognizant,—is this a thing for man to be able perfectly to understand and to interpret? On the contrary, were this on all sides interpretable by us, should we not on this very account be forced to conclude that it could not be divine? From contradictions, clear and undeniable contradictions to immutable moral principles, were such found, we should be entitled, even compelled to recoil. But, if there be only incomprehensibilities, it is impossible in such a region that they should be wanting.

Systems of theology, so called, have too often, and always with most pernicious effect, professed to exhibit the plan of spiritual providence (to use their very words) "as it existed in the Divine Mind." A plan of the intentions of God, a whole excogitated by man, descending to the ground of things and embracing the entire range of the Divine designs—anything professing to be in this sense a connected whole, which, whatever difficulties and darknesses it confesses, yet claims to be a systematised, and, in measure, completed body of truth on this subject, we must maintain carries within it its own confutation and condemnation. Parts of the extended circle, the grand unity, we may rationally hope to distinguish. From many sides a light may fall on us which shall reveal to our immovable conviction the moral glory and grandeur of the Supreme, and shall perfectly satisfy us that all which appears to be irreconcilable is irreconcilable, not in itself, but only in consequence of our limited powers. But the mighty circle must for ever exist to us, only in broken segments, never in its totality and unity ; and amidst all the light which springs from on high to the watchful and earnest soul, there must remain vast darknesses, which we can never penetrate, and never illuminate, vast chasms across which no pathway for us can be projected. That there is a perfect, a glorious whole, we shall believe ; but as a perfect whole it must for ever transcend the range of our faculties.

The sphere of spiritual providence, which alone is open in any degree to human investigation, is this earth. To this sphere we now turn with profound awe, with a settled conviction of the necessary limitation of the human facul-

ties, but with an honest purpose to appreciate, so far as may be possible, and to vindicate the ways of God to man.

Evil is the all-embracing, all-defying mystery of this world. Whether as physical or as moral, it presents a difficulty, in connection with the governing presence of a wise, a holy, and a good being, which calls imperiously for solution. Wherefore was evil in any form allowed an entrance into the world? Wherefore has it been suffered to perpetuate and to spread itself over so vast a portion of our earthly relations? Are not the introduction, the perpetuation, and the extension of evil irreconcilable with the essential principles of the Divine character? Do not these facts limit either the rectitude, or the goodness, or the wisdom, or the power of God?

Physical evil, suffering, is a manifest imperfection; many are tempted to think it a direct injustice. The amount of it may be exaggerated by persons of peculiar temperament, and by all in certain states of mind, and there are important deductions which in speculating on this subject we fail to make. It is perfectly certain, that an immense portion of suffering in our world is preventable, being the direct effect of the folly or the wickedness of the sufferers themselves, or of those with whom they are associated, which therefore need create no difficulty to a candid mind. It admits of no question, besides, that there is a vast amount of actual enjoyment under the existing condition of things, and that the evil, such as it is, is attended with important alleviations. Almost every being, primitively, seems to be made and fitted for en-

joyment. The organs, the materials, and the means of physical happiness are abundant. Perhaps there are no earthly lives in which, except owing to manifest avoidable fault in themselves, or in others, the amount of enjoyment does not far outweigh the amount of suffering. Besides, the rich uses of physical evil are to be taken into account. Character is strengthened and perfected by suffering. It presents new occasions, even new motives, for exercising and invigorating virtuous principles. It elicits a higher kind of excellence than had otherwise been possible, and, in fact, gives birth to an entire class of virtues, which, without its existence, could not have been known.

But when philosophers and divines have expatiated wisely and piously on the advantages of the existing constitution of the world, the real difficulty is felt as acutely as ever; and for its solution their efforts, valuable in other respects, are worse than useless; they are almost an outrage to reason and to right feeling. The fearful inequalities of rank, of condition, and of circumstances among men are before us. How shall they be explained? A susceptible and honest mind turns with deep distress to the fact, that multitudes toil and hurry themselves to a premature grave only in order to gain daily bread, and that multitudes more constantly suffer the most cruel privations, and often have not wherewith even to appease the cravings of hunger. Slavery is one of the terrible scourges of humanity. Multitudes of our race, without fault of theirs, are consigned to hopeless, merciless suffering, are robbed of their highest rights, have their deepest

affections lacerated, and their most sacred relations denied, while a life of degradation and torture is at last buried out of sight in a neglected grave. War is hardly less horrible than slavery. The multitudes that perish by the sword make up but a small part of its enormity. Multitudes yet more numerous, innocent multitudes, are made widows, childless, fatherless. Its consequences to the physical interests of the world, and especially its moral bearings and effects, are not to be estimated. Altogether, as we look abroad on the face of the earth, and think of blighted human lives, broken human hearts, and tears, and groans, and deaths, and all the accumulated woes that weigh down on our race, we ask, in anguish, is this the effect of the government of an Almighty and Merciful Ruler?

Suffering is a real, a terrible enormity. In spite of all that has been urged as to its alleviations and its uses, the common reason of men proclaims aloud that in every view it had been incomparably better (had it been possible) if it had never existed. Those, especially who believe in myriads of beings that have never known suffering, unfallen angels, cannot surely argue that their condition is not preferable to that of our world. It would be litttle less than insanity, to think that a universe exempt from suffering, had such a thing been possible, would have been no better, would not have been inconceivably better, than the universe as it now exists.

But physical evil vanishes beside the overwhelming darkness of moral evil. For the solution of the problem of Divine providence literally nothing is effected so long

as this, its grand and earliest difficulty, is unassailed. Moral evil constitutes the parent mystery of the universe. Perhaps, in the suggestions about to be submitted concerning the introduction and extension of this primary curse, the difficulties connected with physical evil may find a partial solution.

CHAPTER I.

PHYSICAL AND MORAL EVIL IN THE LIGHT OF REASON.

IN FIVE SECTIONS.

SECTION I. RESPONSIBILITY.

II. POWER, THE NECESSARY CONDITION OF RESPONSIBILITY.

III. MORAL EVIL, THE VOLUNTARY ABUSE OF MORAL POWER.

IV. CREATOR INFINITELY OPPOSED TO MORAL EVIL.

V. PHYSICAL EVIL, THE EFFECT, AND THE CORRECTIVE, OF MORAL EVIL.

VI. MORAL EVIL INEVITABLE, BUT REMEDIABLE.

SECTION I.

RESPONSIBILITY.

GROUNDED IN CONSCIENCE.—MORAL INTUITIONS.—HIGHER SIGNIFICANCE. — DOCTRINE OF GOD. — ETERNAL GUARDIAN OF TRUTH AND RIGHT.—IMMORTALITY.—ORIGINAL INTUITION.—ACCOUNTABILITY.—MAN *must* MEET HIS GOD.

DUALISM OF MAN.

THE human nature is obviously dualistic. In a truly great and just sense man is accountable to himself, if to none else, and it is only in the degree in which he recognises this inner self-tribunal that he is able rightly to appreciate a more dread accountableness.

There is such a power as conscience in the human soul; man is not the mere creature of circumstances or of irresistible impulses. Virtue and vice are not the mere, necessary result of his physical organisation and of his outward conditions,—the first involving no merit, and the second no crime. But these assertions are sternly challenged, and modern secularists, materialists, and necessitarians, honestly and ably oppose the upholders of human liberty and responsibility. Two great problems lie at the foundation of the theory of morals: first, What is the distinction between right and wrong? second, By what power of our inward being do we detect this distinction, supposing it to exist? The first regards the nature of virtue; the second, with which we have chiefly to do, touches the existence of a moral sense, and of our moral sentiments.

As a matter of fact, our minds make the distinction

between right and wrong. Nobody doubts, nobody can doubt it. True or false, whatever it may involve, or mean, we do certainly make the distinction: this, at least, is the clear testimony of consciousness. When it is suggested that by such a distinction we mean merely to convey that one sort of feeling or acting is wise and another foolish, one sort useful and another hurtful, the same witness within which testifies to the fact testifies also that this is not its just interpretation. Whatever that be within us which distinguishes right from wrong, the distinction which it makes is not expressed by wisdom and folly, advantage and disadvantage. On the one hand, we are conscious of a kind of approbation which is not awarded to wisdom, or to utility, merely as such, and, on the other hand, we are conscious of a kind of disapprobation which is not awarded to folly, or to injury, merely as such. There is a mode or kind of excellence, which the words wisdom and utility—though they are both attributable to it—do not bring out; we call it moral excellence, virtue: and there is a mode or kind of evil which the words folly and injury—though they are both attributable to it—do not bring out; we call it moral evil, vice. And the question is, by what power or organ do we institute this class of judgments, and to what region of our spiritual nature does this power belong?

If it were a mere calculation which we conducted, and if the moral distinctions drawn by us were altogether, and only or even chiefly, the result of investigation and of reasoning, a balancing of qualities and quantities—as in certain cases, they confessedly are—we should have no difficulty in bringing this within the ordinary function of

the understanding. But the common, intellectual processes it is found are not applicable here, in multitudes of cases, and the understanding, proper, it is found is not, at all events, the first judge in this matter. The distinction between right and wrong is not, in ordinary cases, arrived at by research, and is not argued, and weighed, and balanced, and at last determined, by the judgment. This distinction, usually, is not a discovery which we reach, but a perception, an immediate perception of which we are conscious. It can be likened to nothing so much as to the action of the sense-organs, and the power by which it is effected may most fitly be compared to an inward sense, like the eye or the ear in relation to the outward world. There is a perceptive faculty in the mind which instantly recognises the moral in act or in disposition, the rightness or wrongness of a thing, in the same way as the organ of vision is immediately sensible to the effect of light and shade, and the organ of hearing to the vibrations of the atmosphere. There is a moral nature in man as there is a sensational and an intellectual nature. There is a power whose sphere is the moral, and that power is first of all distinctively perceptive; its province is to apprehend the moral, to perceive rightness and wrongness, and the perception, speaking generally, is immediate, like that by the sense-organs: it is intuitive, it is universal.

Into the numerous and intricate controversies that have arisen as to the originality and the intuitional character of human conscience, we dare not enter. We may be permitted, however, to utter the conviction, that the beautiful analysis of psychological facts in this region by

Sir James Mackintosh,* whose ethical speculations are so admirable as to create the deepest regret that they had not been more extended, fails to sustain his theory of a composite rather than a simple nature of the moral sense. The reasonings of Butler, and still more of Hutcheson, not to name later accomplished ethical writers, uphold the conclusion, that conscience, that which distinguishes right from wrong, is a separate and original power of the human soul. But the difficulties which stand in the way of this conclusion are grave and perplexing. The fact that the most opposite ethical notions apparently, are found in different ages and among different tribes, is not easily reconciled with the supreme authority of conscience. It would seem, that that which is virtue in one age is vice in another,—that that which is condemned in one country is honoured in another. There can be no common moral faculty, it is said, in human nature, when the moral perceptions and judgments of men are thus found to be as opposite and variable as can be conceived. A valid criterion of virtue can never be furnished by that which is so mutable and even so contradictory.

The imperfections and perversions of conscience must be freely admitted, although not to the extent which, from love of theory, has sometimes been alleged; but the conclusion which is founded upon them is distinctly denied. The human eye, through various causes, may become either strengthened in its power of vision, or weakened, and even permanently impaired, and no

* Dissertation on the Progress of Ethical Philosophy. Edinburgh: 1837.

longer capable of distinguishing accurately the effect of light and shade. But we do not therefore question, that to the human race generally this organ is a valid and trustworthy witness of the presence and the qualities of external objects. Memory is a very variable faculty of the mind. It may, on the one hand, be incalculably strengthened, and it may, on the other hand, become exceedingly treacherous and unretentive. But we do not therefore deny, that to the human race generally there is a power which recalls the past and is a valid witness of its reality. Even the faculty of knowing and judging is susceptible of the greatest deterioration. It may be weakened (as it may also be strengthened), it may be perverted, corrupted, and all but lost. In certain localities, and in certain conditions, men are scarcely, if at all, in this respect, elevated above the irrational tribes. But we do not therefore deny that rationality is an attribute, an original and universal attribute, of human nature.

Conscience, like every other power of body or of mind, is improvable and impairable. On the one hand, it may be instructed and educated, and with increasing cultivation may become increasingly capable and trustworthy as a guide. On the other hand, it may be awfully darkened and corrupted, may be irregular in prompting, or may almost cease to prompt to good, and to deter from evil. But it is wholly groundless to argue from this that therefore it is not a universal and original endowment, a precious and imperishable part of our nature.

There is—though susceptible both of deterioration

and of high cultivation—an inborn power of distinguishing right and wrong, virtue and vice, in the human soul; and the first acts of this power, its judgments, if we will so distinguish them, are not, in innumerable instances, formed, as other judgments are, by examining and weighing evidence. They are instinctive and intuitive. With greater exactness, they may be called perceptions rather than judgments,—immediate perceptions of rightness or wrongness, in action or in sentiment.

But besides perceiving, like an inward sense, essential, moral distinctions, the human conscience performs another and a far higher office. With authority, not to be resisted with impunity, it gives forth its commands on the one hand and its prohibitions on the other hand. This is a psychological fact, to be determined by an appeal to consciousness, and which is satisfactorily and indisputably set at rest by this appeal. The question is not, whether the commands and the prohibitions of our moral nature be in themselves right or wrong, or whether they be heeded or unheeded, or to what extent they are heeded, by those to whom they are addressed. But they are given forth. That is certain, and it is enough. There is a power in the human soul which authoritatively pronounces "the ought and the ought not," what Kant distinguishes as "the categorical imperative," in one word, "duty." Conscience may be variously developed, and may be affected by individual, local, and social circumstances; but every human being is aware of a voice within, which is essentially a voice of command. Unlike the other faculties of our nature, this does not submit its materials to be dealt with as the

understanding may determine. It claims within its own sphere a sovereign authority over all the other principles and powers, a supreme and solitary authority. Its mandates are not permitted to be questioned, although without permission they often are questioned, and daringly transgressed. But conscience allows, in no direction, a right of appeal. Its authority needs no confirmation, and admits no reference beyond itself. "This is right, that is wrong," "you ought," "you ought not," is the stern language of this inward lawgiver. And the verdict thus pronounced is its own ground: there is nothing deeper, nothing beyond. Conscience asserts itself not only as a reigning, but as an ultimate authority: its utterances are their own evidence, and except themselves, they ask, they offer, no proof; there is none. We cannot go farther or higher within the limits of our personal sphere.

Thus far, responsibility is a distinct fact in human consciousness. If to none else, man is accountable to himself, and does, in point of fact, take account of himself, and by the very constitution of his spiritual nature condemns or approves himself. It is no fiction, no creation of superstition, no arbitrary restraint, no offspring of groundless fear, but one of the universal, distinctive, and deep realities of his moral being, of which he can no more divest himself than he can throw off his entire nature. Man is under law to himself, and at least by himself is the proper object of praise or blame, reward or punishment. There is, in his essential sphere, such a thing as duty, obligation, and for the same reason, there is to him such a thing as crime, guilt.

But, again, as a simple matter of fact and of consciousness, this sense of responsibility is associated closely and constantly with the idea of a being higher than man himself. Human conscience is felt to be the voice not so much of man as of God. A dispassionate analysis of our mental states exposes the rudimental secret that the real power of conscience lies in the deep conviction that it stands related to a supreme authority, out of itself altogether. There is a sense of God in the human soul, an original intuition that "the Eternal" is, that over us and over all there is a great, an incomprehensible, but a real Power, and conscience gives a peculiar significance to this intuition. The Eternal Being becomes to it the centre and dwelling of moral excellence, the source whence issues the immutable law of right, and the guardian and defender of all that is holy, and just, and true, and the avenger of all that is evil.

The will of our Maker, simply as such, is and must be to us paramount. But conscience attests that the will of our Maker is always and can only be eternally right, and that the eternally right, like God Himself, is uncreated, was ever the same, and could not be changed even by the Supreme. Right and wrong, moral good and moral evil, are independent of time, and place, and circumstance, and person, the same in every part of the universe, and throughout all ages, the same to all intelligences, to created beings, and in the Divine Mind, their sacred and eternal home. Conscience sets before us principles which in themselves know no beginning, no end, no change, and it proclaims aloud that of these principles the Most High is the chosen protector. Right

and wrong are not simply suggestions of conscience, not simply conceptions of the human mind, however great be the force and sanctity which even this involves: they are profound realities in themselves, and, what is still more, there is a Mighty Guardian over them who will not suffer them to be outraged with impunity. To do violence to them is to encounter Him. This is the higher meaning of the sense of responsibility: we have to answer not to conscience only, that is to ourselves, but to the Almighty.

But the convictions and fears of men assume another form still, one yet more definite and extended. The idea of the Unseen Guardian of the great interests of morality, the Defender of good and the Avenger of evil, connects itself with the notion of existence beyond the limits of the present life. These three conceptions, Conscience, God, and Immortality, mutually involve one another. That fear of which all are sensible when violence is done to the authority of conscience is unintelligible, unless there be a Being out of ourselves to whom we are answerable; and this again is feebly interpreted unless we add the latent but irrepressible notion that the power of this Being is capable of reaching us beyond the present world. Even now, there are instances of retributive judgment more than sufficient to arouse our fears. They may be few and rare, but they suggest indefinitely more than they express. They strike the mind, not as terminating acts, but rather as anticipative and incipient, incomplete in themselves, and needing something far more to bring out their significance. They are rather examples of what shall be, than conclusive and comprehensive utterances of what is,

foretokens of the kind of reckoning which, in a few instances, the Almighty takes on earth, but which shall be taken hereafter without abatement. The fears of the stricken conscience are not of evil which shall come down upon us here, but of evil which must overtake us hereafter.

The soul finds within itself a sense of its immortal destiny. And this is not peculiar to any age, or to any form of cultivation. It is not national, not educational, not Christian, but strictly universal. So far as such a point can be investigated, it is found to be strictly universal, and even where it has been discredited, it has first been suppressed. Men must have first unlearnt it, before they argue against its validity. It is not a mere longing after immortality, not a hope only, but a distinct intimation from within. In certain conditions of our nature, the intimation may be feeble, even inaudible; it may be neglected, and resisted; but let humanity be sunk ever so low, it is never so entirely suppressed that it cannot somehow be made audible. He who fashioned the soul has so constituted it, that it is predisposed to form the idea of its own future existence. He must have implanted this predisposition, and must have furnished in the original structure the materials out of which this idea is formed. The intuitions of the soul are the most indubitable of all verities. If the Creator be wise, if He can have no intention to deceive, if He be infinitely true and infinitely kind, these intuitions may be relied upon, as His very voice, and in the most intelligible and direct form, in which He can speak to us. The Maker has with His own signet stamped immortality on the soul of man.

He has destined it, and made it to know that He has destined it, to live for ever.

Conscience points forward to a life to come. Accountableness does not cease when the earthly life has terminated, it must extend over the whole being of the soul, here and hereafter. The wildest notions respecting the future life may float before the mind; but this at least is felt to be certain,—we shall not be out of the reach of our Maker, when the grave hides all that was visible of our personality from the eye of the world. We may be even more near to him, more mysteriously under his eye and in his hand. The account betwixt Him and us, unsettled on earth, will still be open. We are under a law which we have violated, ourselves being judges, and the Almighty is the Guardian of that law. All the fitnesses of things would be contravened, and our essential constitution would be stultified, if our doings and our character were for ever undetermined, unjudged.

The doctrine of responsibility has its ground in the fact of conscience, is unfolded in the sense of God, and at last finds its highest significance in the intuition of immortality. Man is formed to feel within him that he is accountable, not to himself alone, but to a Supreme Authority above him for what he is and for what he does. The idea of duty, of moral obligation, is rooted in his nature, and he cannot divest himself of it. He must answer to his Maker: it is right, it is fitting, it is inevitable, it belongs to his being, that he should be called to answer to the Impartial Judge of right and wrong, the Mighty Guardian of the eternal and immutable laws of the moral universe.

SECTION II.

MORAL POWER THE NECESSARY CONDITION AND MEASURE OF RESPONSIBILITY.

POWER, FREEDOM, HARMONY OF "THE UNCREATED."—CERTAINTY AND CONSTANCY NOT NECESSITY, BUT LIBERTY.—MAN, HIS STRUCTURE: I. CONSCIOUS POWER OF CHOICE.—PHYSIOLOGICAL, PHILOSOPHICAL, THEOLOGICAL DIFFICULTIES.—NECESSARINESS IN HUMAN CHOICE.—HOW, WHY.—WHOLLY SELF-CREATED AND IMPOSED.—MATERIAL AND MORAL CAUSATION.—MAN'S ABSOLUTE DEPENDENCE.—WILL, SECONDARY YET REAL INDEPENDENCE.—CAUSE OF CHOICE NOT WITHOUT BUT WITHIN.—"AUTONOMY" OF WILL.—KANT.—COLERIDGE.—REID.—HAMILTON.—INCONCEIVABLENESS OF MORAL LIBERTY.—COUSIN.—WILL, ITS OWN LAW.—ITS SELF-DETERMINING POWER, MISNOMER.—"LAST DICTATE OF UNDERSTANDING."—"GREATEST APPARENT GOOD."—NO LAW, OUT OF ITSELF, TO WILL.—FATALISM.—II. ADEQUATE ENDOWMENT ESSENTIAL TO POWER OF CHOICE.—MANIAC.—LOWER ANIMALS.—VOLUNTARY LOSS OF MORAL POWER, CRIME.—FORCE OF HABIT.—SENSUALISM.—IRRESPONSIBLE INABILITY.—MORAL MALFORMATION.—RIGHTEOUS CONDITION AND CRITERION.

PERFECTION OF BEING.

CONSISTENT Theists unite in attributing Perfection, and above all, Moral Perfection, to The Supreme. His nature, righteous, benevolent, truthful, pure, must be an infinite harmony. The attributes in Him which answer to reason, conscience, affection, and volition, in man must be eternally at one, not in consequence of foreign necessity, but owing to eternal, immovable choice. Imagine—if it be lawful, on so sacred a subject, to hazard such a thing—but for the sake of illuminating a grand and settled truth, imagine a momentary disturbance in the Uncreated Mind, emotion, affection, or desire, out of harmony with reason or rectitude; that moment would record a loss of power and of freedom in The Supreme. A nature unharmonious, at variance with itself, is just therefore enfeebled and enslaved. It is unconcentrated, overborne for the time, and paralysed by an evil within, instead of being bestowed on free, unimpaired, and unopposed self-development. He alone, who is at one with himself, is strong, happy, and free, prepared for decisive and true self-manifestation. But the harmony of the Divine Nature is eternally self-derived and self-sustained; there is no cause of it, except moral power, absolute freedom, the spontaneous force of God's own

Being. The moral and the intellectual in Him—if we dare employ such language—are alike infinitely beautiful in His eyes, and all the movements of the Divine Nature are in perfect concord with them; but the cause is only and wholly internal choice. There can be no other. Clearly, this issue is what it ought to be, is altogether right, and alone right; but that which is right and which ought to be, the Most High chooses shall be. It is the perfection of his Being that he does so, and that he can, because he will, do nothing else.

Possibility of another than any actual course, mere physical power for this purpose, there must ever be to the Supreme, most manifestly; but moral power, free choice in Him, is the governor and the guide of physical possibility. Inert, dormant potentiality in itself is nothing, does nothing; it is stirred into action only by will. The Great Being chooses, always chooses, to exert his Almightiness in one direction and no other, in consistency, with perfect wisdom, perfect rectitude, and perfect love. If He does not, if He never does, if, as we speak, He never can act otherwise, it is simply and only because He will not, it is owing not to a defect but to a perfection, and because what He chooses shall be is always what ought to be, and nothing else. That is to say, He commands, instead of being commanded, by His own illimitable resources. It is not because He is constrained, but because He cannot be constrained, and ever determines only as He pleases to determine.

To say, therefore, that the Supreme cannot but choose what is wise, and right, and good, is simply to express his absolute moral power and freedom; it is to affirm, that

his choice cannot be forced into discordance with rectitude, and wisdom, and goodness. Only by force could He act inconsistently with these attributes of His Being, and a deviation from the invariable, immutable course of His procedure would be a proof, not of freedom, but of compulsion. Such a deviation, therefore, is impossible, not because He is necessitated, but because He cannot be necessitated. Freely, spontaneously, unconstrained from without and from within, He chooses, for ever and ever chooses, only what is wise and right and good. To assert that the Supreme Will is nevertheless necessitated, is mere vexatious imbecility; for necessity and self-determined choice are the most direct opposites: and no higher announcement of perfect liberty can be put into words than when we say that a being absolutely governs his own choice.

Invariable constancy and certainty of action, whether in God or in a holy creature, are no proof of compulsion, but the reverse, and in the case of the Highest Nature, they result from absolute moral freedom.

The spiritual structure of man, the original constitution of the human soul, and its relation to the highest purposes of being are not hard to interpret. As responsible, rational, and moral, man is formed and empowered to choose the true and the right; his divine destiny is to yield to moral obligation and to the force of truth. Reason and conscience within him are his ordained guides, and he knows that they are so; their utterances are, in themselves, above everything else, they are so to the Supreme, and they ought to be to all created souls, they are so eternally and necessarily, and never can be

otherwise; and that man is thus constituted, is only to say that the Creator formed him in harmony with the eternal order of the moral universe. A created mind whose will acts in obedience to conscience and reason rises to the true ideal of a perfect moral creature—a likeness of The Uncreated. This is the highest freedom, it is power, it is glory. Will, in man or in The Creator Himself, will, in any rational nature, is truly free and truly right, only when it is thus determined. The spiritual mechanism is then harmonious and the moving power is faithful to the design of the structure. The true and the right ought ever to be chosen; they deserve to be preferred above everything else; and when they are preferred, in fact, the created being then, and only then, realises the Divine Idea, and reveals entire, constitutional self-command.

Of all the endowments of his rational and moral nature, the attribute of will is the one which constitutes man an independent actor, a responsible being, and not an irresponsible thing. His conscience and his reason are activities, but they are so in themselves, and in a great degree independently of his control, and they do not necessarily create or call forth any activity beyond themselves. They perceive, meditate, contain and present truth, but in this their office is exhausted. In thinking and reasoning on any subject, in perceiving and judging, the soul is active, but the activity—if the paradox be not too gross—is, in some sort, passive; and, were there no other power, it could only terminate where it began, and would lead to nothing, almost mean nothing. But there is another power in man, a power essentially active, pro-

ductive, strictly causative. That which constitutes him properly a responsible agent, and not a mere instrument, is his faculty of will. In the Divine nature, the root and very essence of perfect goodness is the infinitely wise, righteous, and pure will. But that which in God is the spring of all good, becomes in the created being, through its abuse, the root and essence of all evil. Sin lies only and wholly in the evil will. Wheresoever or whensoever there is conscious sin, it can arise from and can consist in nothing but an evil will, culpably ignorant, unwise, unrighteous, impure, or perversely rebellious.

Two questions suggest themselves here, both of which touch profoundly the doctrine of responsibility. Is man possessed of entire liberty of choice? Is he truly self-determining? And if he be, is he also so endowed as to be qualified to use this sacred attribute? Moral power is, first of all, simply synonymous with freedom of choice, but, in its truer and higher meaning, it includes ability to use this freedom, so as to secure the ends of the spiritual organisation.

I. Is man, in the structure of his soul, perfectly free to choose for himself? It is doubted by none, that there are states of mind of which he is conscious, which, in common language, we distinguish as his determinations, preferences, choices. Does he himself really form them? Has he himself the absolute power of forming them? Or are they only things happening within him, of which he is conscious, precisely as he is conscious of sensations within him, and perceptions over which he has no, or only a limited control? Are these mental states merely the result of circumstances, or the necessary effect of his physical and his spiritual structure? Or again, are they wholly the effect, of which his power of free choice is the cause? We venture to think that these great and grave issues are resolvable into a single question of simple fact, belonging to the sphere of consciousness. They all suppose and refer to a certain mental experience, the reality of which, or its non-reality, its character, and its ground, can be ascertained only by an appeal to consciousness. The response of universal human consciousness is the only thing to be ascertained. Is there within human beings a conscious power of choosing for themselves, and, as a matter of fact, are they constantly and invariably exercising this inward power, however their outward acting be fettered? We maintain that the answer is unequivocal and universal. Men are not conscious of

compulsion* of any kind, not conscious of certain mental states, called choices, which are either wholly or partially independent of their free agency, but they are perfectly and distinctly conscious of entire liberty, and of complete inward power to choose.

A choice, a preference—confining the word strictly to the secret, inward act, irrespective of any outward aim, which, therefore, might be affected by outward relations—is altogether a man's own deed, with which no being in the universe can interfere. Wholly internal, none besides himself and the God that made his mind can even know it. He chooses, that means, he himself inwardly prefers, knows, and feels, that he prefers one thing to another. The fact may be communicated to none, the opposite of the fact may be asserted by the man himself, and he may even act as if the opposite were the truth. But all the while, his real inward preference lies clear within his consciousness. He sees it, and knows that he alone determined it. For himself, so far as it rests with him, he has inwardly pronounced for one out of two or more alternatives. He has done this: it is not simply a fact taking place in his mind. He has distinctly caused it to take place; whatever others wish, deem best, prefer, he for himself is perfectly conscious that, in his secret mind, he has freely and deliberately adopted this. The grounds of the choice are not the question. He may or he may not be able readily to explain them. They may be strong

* It will be shown in a subsequent page that there is a kind of compulsion, or self-enslavement, a kind of invincible necessity which men create for themselves. But they and they alone create it. The compulsion is not imposed and enforced from without, but produced and chosen from within.

and valid, or futile and vicious. But he is conscious of having been free to choose, and that he has exercised his freedom, in this instance; for himself, independently of every other being, he knows and feels, not that a preference somehow has been formed in his mind, but that he has formed the preference, and that it is wholly and only his own independent, voluntary deed. He may be compelled to act, contrary to his choice, but the choice abides the same, notwithstanding. The arbitrary power of others, or the force of circumstances, can and does affect his outward acting. But no power out of himself can form for him or impose upon him, a real inward preference: that is only and wholly his own act. No imaginable species of force or fraud can in any way touch it; if it could, and if there were conscious compulsion, he would then feel that he could have no choice; the one would be absolutely destructive of the other. If a man be constrained, this means, if it mean anything, that the thing to which he is constrained is not his choice. If he inwardly chooses, it means, if it mean anything, that on the one hand he is conscious of no constraint, and, on the other hand, is distinctly conscious, not of merely accepting something which is done for him or in him, but of himself doing something, himself acting freely and independently. As for unconscious constraint, or mere passivity, mistaken for voluntary activity, it is a puerile fiction. The only evidence we can have of a mental phenomenon, an inward fact, is that of consciousness; beyond what we are conscious of, as passing in our minds at the moment, there is, and there can be to us, no reality. To assert the reality of any mental condition, of

which we are not only not conscious, but of the opposite of which we are distinctly conscious, is glaringly false. Moreover, in this instance, the evidence of consciousness is not negative but positive. In inwardly preferring and choosing, a man is not only not conscious of compulsion, but he is conscious that there is no compulsion, conscious, also, not of passivity but of activity, independent, voluntary activity, and that all that is done in him is wholly his doing.

Physiologists discourse to us of the nervous system, the different kinds of nervous matter, the different forms of nervous structure, and of the consequent different nervous susceptibility in different individuals. They assure us, very honestly, without doubt, that what we call free-will is a mere delusion, which we practise on ourselves, and that the peculiar character and disposition of each individual, which entirely determine his inward preferences, his volitions, are the certain result of his material, and, in connection with it, his mental organisation, acted upon by the outward influences and circumstances amidst which he is placed.

Philosophers and divines torture us with their reasonings; suggesting, seeming contradictions between facts and principles, putting forth the logical consequences on the one side and the other, that inevitably follow from certain admissions, and maintaining that, though there be no foreign physical constraint, there is a universal necessariness in the decisions of the will. Every choice, it is alleged, is necessary, in the sense that it could not have been other than it is. The course of the human will is as determinate as the course of the stars, and the

law which governs it is as universal as that of gravitation. In material changes all proceeds according to settled principles, which meet every case and which cannot be contravened; and, in a moral sequence, it is maintained, there is the same necessary connection between cause and effect. The determinations of the will, though seemingly uncompelled,* are inevitable according to the laws of moral causation, and cannot, in a single instance, be other than they are. It amounts to this—that, at the time when the human agent forms an inward preference, there is one thing, and only one thing—the thing which he at last prefers—possible to him; that, instead of freely making a choice, as we call it, he has no real power, and can only yield to an absolute necessity; and that what is called his choice, instead of originating in a power within him, the free exercise of which belongs to him, is the mere and necessary effect of the nature of things, which, through his medium, only exhibits and announces itself.

It is not here denied that there is a side and a measure of truth in these representations made by upright and able men. If we were thoroughly acquainted with the entire circumstances in which any human choice is formed, if we thoroughly understood the individual's physical and mental structure, all his antecedents, all his surroundings, and all the influences of every kind, amidst which he was placed at the moment, his temperament, his tendencies, his character, his dispositions, and his spirit, the weakness or strength of his mind, its per-

* The verbal contradiction is not ours, but attaches to the theory we are combating.

sistency or vacillation, his habits also, whether trained to self-control or irresolute and feeble, we should then and thus be able to anticipate with certainty the determination of his will. But why? Not because a force in itself irresistible and independent of his choice would compel his course, but, simply and wholly, because we should thus get to know, beforehand, the bias of his mind, and what he, of his own free accord, was likely to prefer.

There is a certainty, a necessity—if you will—in every human choice. But the question is, how is the necessity created? I maintain that, from first to last, it is self-created, and is not from without, but from within. The man himself alone can create it. The law of antecedent and consequent, of cause and effect, may be said to be supreme here, as everywhere else. But the patent, conscious fact is either forgotten or ignored, that at every single step in the formation of a choice, from first to last, the immediate antecedent, the true cause, is not the superior intrinsic force of this or that motive, but the voluntary surrender of the free agent to the influence which he prefers. The man, choosing to yield himself to one or other influence, or to reject them all, is the real, the determining cause. The man himself, choosing, is the final and the only creator of the result—a choice.

Any single object of desire, any single antecedent or number of antecedents (whatever be their inherent force), has only that amount of power and no more, which the individual chooses to allow and yield up to it. In itself, first of all, no object of desire, in competition with others, has power to determine a choice. Each is an appeal urged upon the man, a claim addressed to him,

inherently more or less strong or feeble. But it is not till he, of his own free will, allies himself with one or other, that it acquires real power. For he thus voluntarily gives it power. He puts into it, simply because he chooses to put into it, all the power which it possesses. He himself, of his own choice, and not the mere necessary antecedent force lying in the object of desire, insures and causes this result. The plain fact of universal consciousness is this, that at first a man is capable of resisting and repelling desire if he chooses. But what if he does not so choose? He could summon to his aid judgment and conscience, and the facts of observation and experience. But he does not, because he chooses not. Voluntarily he gives himself to the object of desire, and by cherishing and pursuing it, he and he alone arms it with all the force which it acquires. Voluntarily he chooses to disregard the voice of judgment, and conscience, and experience, and to surrender himself to a forbidden course. He might have, and could have, at the first, put away the evil from him, but he chose not; he would not. This is the first and last and only thing, true to experience, which can be said, he would not. And if in the end there be, as there often is, an actual necessity created, he himself alone, of his own free choice, has created it, and nothing else. No outward circumstances, no inherent necessariness in the nature of things, but his own will has conducted him in every step of his course, and he knows it.

A necessitated choice is a palpable contradiction, but there is one sense in which the contradiction vanishes and becomes a fact of experience. Man creates for him-

self, and he alone can create the necessity by which at last he is compelled; of his own accord, of his own free choice, he attaches himself to some object of desire or to some aim or end in life. It may be unwise, it may be injurious, it may be wholly unrighteous, and he is perfectly capable of discerning that it is. But he is determinedly bent upon it. His will is fixed and unmovable. Freely, and with his eyes open, he chooses and is resolved to surrender himself to this desire or aim with which he has linked his destiny. By a well-known law, desire is strengthened by indulgence, and, on the other hand, by the same law, the increased strength of desire involves a corresponding weakening of the power of resistance. At last, it is literally true that he has no alternative any more in this regard, and that only one thing becomes to him morally possible. But why? Simply and only because he, of his own free choice, has thus determined himself. He has not been forced against his will. He himself alone has deliberately shut himself up to one certain course and no other. Other courses were open, if he chose, and they are still perfectly open to him, if he chooses. But he will not choose. The only necessity which can exist for him is one which he alone has created, and which continues, and can continue, only because he chooses that it shall continue.

To return to the general argument: in the act of willing or choosing, every sane man is distinctly conscious that two things (at the least two) are before him. If there were consciously only one thing within the range of possibility, he, with all the world, would protest that he could have no choice. The word implies a decision

between at least two possibilities. The absurdity is not to be measured, of asserting that, though apparently—and consciously to him—there be more than one, yet in reality and of absolute necessity, there is only one thing, possible. His entire consciousness contradicts the assertion. At least two things are before him, and the cause of his taking the one and not the other, the sole cause he finds in himself; it is the consciously voluntary act, the self-determining power of his soul. Amidst motive influences of a thousand kinds the issue, whatever may be alleged from any quarter, he is perfectly assured, by the highest authority within him, was owing entirely to a voluntary exercise of his power of choice. So far from being compulsory or inevitable (unless self-caused), he is distinctly conscious that he might have made, could have made, and was perfectly free to make, another choice, and that the sole reason why he did not, was in himself—he absolutely determined on this.

We take refuge in the indestructible testimony of consciousness. Whatever be false, this must be true, and lies at the foundation of all truth; there is no truth in the universe for man, if this be false; we can trust to nothing evermore, if this deceive us. The absolute veracity of consciousness is a first principle of all knowledge, all true science, and all sound philosophy. Standing on this immovable basis, unable perhaps to go beyond it, or to remove any of the difficulties which on so many sides are started, and in such appalling array, we are

perfectly secure. The clear, loud voice of consciousness to every human being is, that, as constituted by God, he is entirely free to choose for himself, and is endowed with power to this end.

Moral causation, when viewed in the light of consciousness, as a question of simple fact, and of psychological induction, is altogether different from the same subject, when reasoned out, on the ground of what we take leave to call a vicious physics, or metaphysics. The material world is only and wholly a succession of antecedents and consequents, or, as we speak, of causes and effects; there is no such thing as departure from the great laws of the universe, not an atom, nor the minutest change can be out of the sphere of their control; they are all-comprehensive and invariable. External phenomena, always and everywhere, are simply the effect of the operation of these laws; there is nothing to overcome, nothing even to question or interfere with their operation. But when we pass from the material to the moral world, at the very threshold we meet with a kind of power, to which no analogy can be found in the region we have left behind. Man is constituted a voluntary being; he is endowed with a power of choosing, and instead of taking his place in a succession of antecedents and consequents, he is a free-worker, a voluntary causer, and consciously directs and determines his inward self. His mind, instead of being a mere recipient of impulses and their obedient servant, he knows and feels, is placed so far above them, that it is inwardly free (even though the liberty of outward expression be denied) to choose or to refuse any or all of them. It is thus

strictly a causer, a conscious, voluntary beginner of change, from itself, and by a faculty belonging to itself, and under its control, though derived from its Maker. In the fact of voluntariness, the fact of the power of choosing, the Almighty has conferred on man a secondary, but nevertheless a real independence.

In his being, man cannot be independent for a single instant. In relation to no power with which his being is gifted, can he ever be independent. That being with all its powers is the creation of the Most High, and never can have any ground of existence, except in the Most High. But there is one part of his nature which, by the constitution which the Creator has given it, has no purpose and no meaning, except in a secondary, yet real independence. As a voluntary being, man is necessarily, in the last instance, governed by himself. At any moment, the Almighty might withdraw, as he implanted, this power of self-government. But a free will abiding, the Almighty could not necessitate its action in any given direction. That man is inwardly free to choose for himself his consciousness for ever assures him, and in the face of this assurance the necessitation of his choice, by any other cause whatever, becomes an impossibility and a contradiction. True, the Supreme is ever acting, acting mightily and mercifully on every soul He has made. Those gentle, illuminating, and purifying inspirations that flow out so richly from nature in its countless forms are His, descend from Him, and draw, as they rise again, to Him. By the many voices of His moral providence, also, He makes His presence and His power felt, and, most of all, His agency is put forth in the direct presentation of moral truth and

in the direct influences of His own mighty Spirit. But amidst agencies for good on the one hand, and agencies for evil on the other hand, it belongs to man, if he will, independently, freely, to choose. He is endowed with the faculty of will, and cannot, without the destruction of his nature as the Almighty has constituted it, be necessitated or made merely passive, except by himself. Free, independent choice stands at the diametrically opposite extreme from necessitation and from mere passivity. The proximate cause of what a free being really chooses, what he in his heart prefers, must be found in himself alone, not in the constraint of circumstances, not in the necessity of the nature of things, nor in necessity of any kind, (though these may and do affect his actual, outward course,) but in his will, in a purely voluntary act of his own.

There belong to man, moral perceptions and convictions, intellectual reasonings and judgments; emotions of various kinds, fears, hopes, affections; desires connected with his interests, his reputation, his standing, arising not only from his strictly personal sphere, but from his relation to others in social and civil life, and last and not least of all, appetites and passions connected with his animal nature. But amidst these manifold and various influences, he is left perfectly free to choose as he pleases, and, as a matter of fact, he cannot but form and alone determine his own choice. If it could be shown, that what he inwardly prefers at any moment was not really his choice, but was wholly the result of circumstances, of an influence either contained in them, or arising from their collocation or the mode of their presentation, this

would in effect divest him of the power of will, and render it unmeaning and worthless. The cause of human choice (then a misnomer) would be, not in man, but in the nature, the arrangement, and the accidents of things foreign to the sphere of his consciousness. When it is said that every moral, like every physical effect, must have a cause, a sufficient cause, it is forgotten that the power of will in man is itself, or rather that man willing, exercising the faculty of will, is himself a cause—an independent cause, apart from everything else. He is acted upon by a thousand influences, but he does not necessarily yield to any of them, else freedom, spontaneity, voluntariness, are gone. He is thus far a productive, creative causer; an actor, not a mere instrument, acting as it is acted upon. In physical sequences we have only the things themselves to consider; in moral sequences, there is present a causative force in addition to the things themselves, and wholly apart from them.

"The autonomy of the will"—an expressive mode of indicating the doctrine we have sought to establish—will suggest, to those who are conversant with ethical speculation, the honoured name of Kant. However eccentric may be that mode of thought, characteristic of him, which deals with humanity as if it were the highest thing in the universe, and which seems to ignore its absolute and perpetual dependence, we cannot forget, that moral liberty—as it has since been expounded by almost all the distinguished thinkers of Europe, he was among the first to

argue out by the severest logic and to establish on the strong ground of reason and Conscience. In his "Metaphysik der Sitten," to some extent also in his "Religion innerhalb der Gränzen der blossen Vernunft," and especially in his "Kritik der reinen practischen Vernunft," the autonomy (self-law)—the self-governing power—of the will is proved by arguments which have not yet been met. "Pure Reason" (we should say Conscience) "is essentially practical, and gives (to man) a universal law, which we style the law of morals." "The self-governing power of the will is the sole basis of all moral laws, and of the duties rising out of them. An arbitrary or any other governing power could not only not establish moral obligation, but would be subversive of the principle of obligation and of the moral nature of the will."*

The views of Coleridge on this profound subject will be traced by many to his German masters, perhaps justly. But they are his distinctly and deliberately nevertheless, strongly marked with the impress of his peculiar individuality, and connected besides with religious theories, to which Kant and Schelling certainly never would have subscribed. The sage of Königsberg was never charged with believing in original and imputed sin. Coleridge de-

* "Reine Vernunft ist für sich allein practisch und giebt (dem Menschen) ein allgemeines Gesetz welches wir das Sittengesetz nennen . . . . . Die Autonomie des Willens ist das alleinige Princip aller moralischen Gesetze und der ihnen gemässen Pflichten: alle Heteronomie der Willkühr gründet dagegen nicht allein gar keine Verbindlichkeit, sondern ist vielmehr dem Princip derselben und der Sittlichkeit des Willens entgegen."—Kritik der prakn Vert. Riga, 1788. See also Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten, pp. 56, 58. Riga, 1785. Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Rechtslehre, 1797. . . . . Der Tugendlehre. Königsb. 1797.

voutly and humbly bowed to both—though in a sense of his own—but along with them he maintained the "autonomy of the will." Referring to those who hold certain extreme views, which he had before described, he says, "They exaggerate the diseased weakness of the will into an absolute privation of all freedom, thereby making moral responsibility, not a mystery above comprehension, but a direct contradiction, of which we do distinctly comprehend the absurdity." . . . . "I maintain, that a will conceived separately from intelligence is a nonentity, and a mere phantasm of abstraction; and that a will the state of which does in no sense originate in its own act, is an absolute contradiction. It might be an instinct, an impulse, a plastic power, and, if accompanied with consciousness, a desire; but a will it could not be." "This is the essential attribute of a will, and contained in the very idea, that whatever determines the will acquires the power from a previous determination of the will itself. The will is ultimately self-determined, or it is no longer a will under the law of perfect freedom, but a nature under the mechanism of cause and effect."* The German and the modern English (the school of Coleridge deserves to be so called, it has already acquired a national extension and authority) and the older Scottish philosophies are at one on this subject. Reid's essay on the Liberty of Moral Agents is not the least remarkable in his book.† With rare sagacity he seizes the profound and most vital points of the question, and whether in expounding and

* "Aids to Reflection," vol. i. pp. 103, 104, 219.

† Essay IV., Part 3. Essays on Intellectual and Active Powers. London, 1822.

proving his own theory, or in dealing with antagonists, he evinces a surpassing simplicity, skill, acuteness, native masculine force, and a thorough mastery of principles and their applications. With quiet, dignified, philosophic precision, he defines the liberty of a moral agent to be "his power over the determinations of his own will." Throughout, the argument is convincing, we believe unanswerable, by which he proves that this power belongs to man. It must not be concealed, however, that the illustrious editor of Reid does not consent to the conclusiveness of the argument for the freedom of the will, though he entirely bows to the certainty of the fact. With great deference we presume to suggest that Hamilton betrays in this instance the influence of that peculiar theory* of causation, which resolves it into "the doctrine of the conditioned," "the impossibility of our conceiving an absolute commencement." "Is the person," he asks, "an original, undetermined cause of the determination of his will? . . . . If he be, in the first place it is impossible to conceive the possibility of this, and in the second, if the fact, though inconceivable, be allowed, it is impossible to see how a cause, undetermined by any motive, can be a rational, moral, and accountable cause. . . . . We cannot compass in thought an undetermined cause, an absolute commencement. . . . . The doctrine of moral liberty cannot be made conceivable, for we can only conceive the determined and the relative."†

Again, Reid had maintained that it is "weak reasoning, in proof of necessity, to say such a motive prevailed,

* Discussions in Philosophy, &c.

† Hamilton's Reid, note, p. 602. Edinburgh, 1849.

therefore it is the strongest, since the defenders of liberty maintain that the determination was made by the man and not by the motive." On this Hamilton asks, "But was the man determined by no motive to this determination? Was his specific volition to this or to that without a cause? On the supposition that the sum of influences (motives, dispositions, tendencies) to volition A is equal to 12, and the sum of influences to counter-volition B equal to 8, can we conceive that the determination of volition A should not be necessary? We can only conceive the volition B to be determined by supposing that the man creates (calls from non-existence into existence) a certain supplement of influences. But this creation, as actual, or in itself, is inconceivable; and even to conceive of this inconceivable act, we must suppose some cause by which the man is determined to exert it."*

1. True; we must, and we do suppose some cause, but that cause, a perfectly sufficient one, is the man himself, endowed with the power of free-will. That power, or rather, he himself wielding it, is strictly a creator, giving to each motive more or less influence than intrinsically belongs to it; a causer, a primitive causer, the causer and creator of that which before had no existence, a choice; but not a creator out of nothing. Pre-existing materials are before him, A, B, C, D, &c. (motive influences), but through the medium of one or other, or all of these, now imparting to them and again abstracting from them, he creates, causes to exist, what before was absolutely non-existent, a choice. His self-determining power does

* Hamilton's Reid, note, p. 611.

this, not the superior intrinsic force of A, B, C, D, or any other motive influence, but he, himself, in willing, causes this new existence. His faculty, his liberty of choosing, means this or it means nothing.

2. When it is said that if he acts without a sufficient motive, he cannot be a rational, a moral, an accountable cause, it is forgotten that herein lies the very essence of moral evil. A responsible being chooses to act, and has power to choose to act, an irrational, an immoral part, and is, for the time, not a rational, a moral cause, but a cause none the less. Hence, and only hence, is the anomaly of moral evil. The thing is not rational, not moral, but it is a fact, an abnormal, monstrous fact in the moral universe. Man misuses his power of choice; unconstrained except by himself, he does this, chooses to do it, and just, therefore, is in the highest sense accountable. A perfect moral being, one faithful to his constitution, for ever chooses what is strongest in reason and conscience, in other words, exercises his volitional power legitimately. But there is only himself, ultimately, only his own free will, to hinder him from making another choice. Were it not possible for a rational, a moral being to act an irrational, an immoral part, and at the same time to retain his accountability, there could never have been such a thing as moral evil in the universe. It is a matter of fact every day with rational, moral, accountable beings on earth, that while motive-influence A is = to 12, and motive-influence B is = to 8, and they know that they are so, they yet choose B and refuse A. Man endowed with the power of choosing is in himself a true causer, the only true, the ultimate causer of choice.

3. When it is said "we cannot compass in thought"—that is, cannot fully comprehend—"an indetermined cause, an absolute commencement," it is admitted unreservedly; but we may be able to see and to show, nevertheless, that the thing, though incomprehensible and inexplicable, must be a reality. Nor ought we to forget that precisely the same difficulty, only in a far higher degree, attaches to the notion of the Supreme First Cause, though we do not therefore doubt His reality. Hamilton teaches, with a resistless force which few except himself could command, that the inconceivableness of any fact of consciousness is no argument against its reality. "It will argue nothing against the trustworthiness of consciousness," says he, "that all or any of its deliverances are inexplicable — are incomprehensible; that is, that we are unable to conceive through a higher notion how that is possible which the deliverance avouches actually to be. To make the comprehensibility of a datum of consciousness the criterion of its truth, would be indeed the climax of absurdity; for the primary data of consciousness, as themselves the conditions under which all else is comprehended, are necessarily themselves incomprehensible. We know, and can know only, that they are, not how they can be."* Hamilton, in fact, is no less thoroughly convinced of the reality of moral liberty than Reid, though he denies that the thing can be conceived, or that it can be logically established. "It will be observed," says he, "that I do not consider the inability to the notion any disproof of the fact of free-will."† All that he advances amounts substantially to

* Hamilton's Reid, p. 745. † Ib. p. 611.

this—"there are among the phenomena of mind many facts which we must admit as actual, but of whose possibility we are wholly unable to form any notion."* "But though inconceivable, this fact (of moral liberty) is not therefore false; for there are many contradictories (and of contradictories one must and one only can be true) of which we are equally unable to conceive the possibility of either. The philosophy, therefore, which I profess, ... establishes liberty practically as a fact, by showing that it is either itself an immediate datum, or is involved in an immediate datum of consciousness."†

The unqualified language of Cousin may fitly conclude the evidence, already ample enough, that on this great subject the most vigorous thinkers, the most accomplished philosophers, of modern times, the men who are most competent to pronounce a judgment, and who have devoted themselves most laboriously to the study of the points at issue, are entirely agreed. The inconsistency (apparent or real) between Cousin's doctrine of the will and another of the distinctive articles of his philosophy, "the impersonality of reason," it falls not to us either to reconcile or to expose. For our purpose, it will be enough to quote a few sentences from his admirable critique on Locke's "Essay on the Human Understanding." "Liberty," he says, "belongs to those acts which we perform with the consciousness of doing them, and of being able not to do them." Again: "Analysis discovers in this single element (of willing) two terms—namely, a special act of willing, and the power of willing, which is within us, and to which we refer the special act.

* Hamilton's Reid, note, p. 602. † Ib. note, p. 509.

That act is an effect in relation to the power of willing, which is its cause; and this cause, in order to produce its effect, has need of no other theatre, and no other instrument than itself. . . . . At the moment it exerts itself on any special act we are conscious that it might exert itself in a special act totally contrary without any obstacle, without being thereby exhausted; so that, after having changed its acts a hundred times, the faculty remains integrally the same, inexhaustible and identical, amidst the perpetual variety of its applications, being always able to do what it does not do, and able not to do what it does. Here, then, in all its plenitude, is the characteristic of liberty." *

We come to this determinate conclusion, that will in man or in God, voluntary moral being, must be its own

* "La liberté . . . . . tombe sur les actes que nous faisons avec la conscience, et de les faire et de pouvoir ne pas les faire. L'analyse découvre dans ce seul élément deux termes encore, savoir un acte spécial de vouloir, et la puissance de vouloir en nous à laquelle nous le rapportons. Cet acte est un effet par rapport à la puissance de vouloir qui en est la cause; et cette cause, pour produire son effet, n'a pas besoin d'autre théâtre, ni d'autre instrument qu'elle-même. . . . . Au moment même où elle s'exerce par tel acte spécial, nous avons la conscience qu'elle pourrait s'exercer par un acte spécial, toute contraire sans nul obstacle et sans que pour cela elle fût épuisée; de manière, qu'après avoir changé dix fois, cent fois d'actes, la faculté restât intégralement la même, inépuisable et identique à elle-même, dans la perpétuelle variété de ces applications, pouvant toujours faire ce qu'elle ne fait pas et ne pas faire ce qu'elle fait. Là donc est dans toute sa plénitude le caractère de la Liberté." (Cours de l'Histoire de la Philosophie. Tom. ii. pp. 502, 509. Paris: 1829.

law. There is verily a law, the highest conceivable law, to which the created will ought to be subject, to which it is formed to be subject, and in chosen subjection to which its true freedom consists. But there is no will and no law which it is obliged of necessity to obey. These two things are essentially opposed, will and irresistible law, voluntary being and being acting necessarily as it is acted upon. A law is the expressed will of another. If the will of another, in itself, necessitates, compels a certain mental act from me, there is no possible sphere for the exercise of my will; but if it be left to my choice to coincide or not with the will of another, then, and then only, I am in the true sense voluntary. My will and the expressed will of another may perfectly coincide; there may be no just cause why they should not; and in a perfect creature, this entire coincidence of choice with the highest law that is, the coincidence of the finite with the Infinite Will, is realised. The free choice of such a creature and the Divine law are in blessed and unbroken harmony; but will, as will, is essentially distinct from law as law. In vain do we attempt to explain the phenomena of human volition on principles analogous to those on which we account for material phenomena. The last can all be resolved into the action of pervading and irresistible forces, but if in any similar way we interpret the action of the will, we destroy its very nature. It is beginning with a fallacy, to imagine a reason in law, for a choice, because the ultimate reason must be the independent, voluntary act of the free agent himself. He has so elected; this may literally be all, and no rational expla-

nation why he has so elected, may be possible.* The human will ought to be in harmony with the highest law, that of God, but it cannot be compelled without being annihilated; it may act, it often does act, in the face of law and of reason, and no cause whatever can be assigned, except itself. It belongs to man to choose, and his choice finds its ultimate ground, often its only ground, in himself.

The self-determining power of the will, strictly speaking, is a palpable misnomer. Will is only the name for a particular fact in the constitution of the human soul, a particular attribute with which the Maker has endowed it. When a man forms a deliberate preference, he puts forth this attribute, he verifies this fact in his constitution. But will is a thing, not a being, an agent. It is absurd to say that it determines itself. It itself has no real objective existence, except in its embodiment in an act, and only in the moment of the act. The reasoning by which President Edwards demolishes this fallacy is unanswerable. But, meanwhile, it may yet be true that man determines himself. The reasoning, which is resistless against the former position, is futile when directed against this position. The self-determining power, not of the will, but of the being endowed with will, of man, is only a significant mode of announcing the fact, which consciousness attests with such emphasis, that he is voluntary and independent. Possessing the faculty of choosing, he is in choosing self-governed, self-determined.

This constitutional self-government of the human soul does not involve indifference alike to good and to evil,

* See pp. 176, 225.

and does not suppose a moral equilibrium, in no degree more inclined to one side than another. The only perfect moral freedom in the universe is that, which ever owns the supremacy of truth and right, and is ever in uninterrupted harmony with them. The Eternal knows no equilibrium, no indifference, but an infinite inclination to good and an infinite abhorrence of evil; and the higher and the more perfect the created nature is, the more complete in this respect will be its assimilation to the Divine, and the further will it be removed from indifference, and with the more entire voluntariness and the more conscious delight will it yield itself to the control of truth and of moral law: but it must yield itself. Conscience and reason are the ordained guides of the created mind. In themselves, and on every ground, whether of duty or of interest, they are entitled to be its guides. The intimations of these powers are the more sacred, the more awful, that they are felt to express the very will of the Creator. Were the human soul perfect and infallible, these intimations would be for ever paramount to it; but it is so constituted at the same time, that this result can in no way be necessitated, except by itself: there can be no must to it. It may or it may not decide for truth and right, but whether it does or not, must depend on itself, ultimately and alone; there is no power out of itself that can necessitate its acting,—it is its own law.

If these reasonings be sound, we are furnished with a short and decisive reply to many of the conclusions of an earlier metaphysical theology. "The will always follows the last judgment, the last dictate of the understanding" —this has been accepted as revealing the law of the will

the invariable and necessary order of its movement; the constitution according to which it acts, according to which it must act. On the principles which have been advanced, we are entitled to assert, not only that this is not the law of the will, but that there is and can be no law to the will, in the sense here meant. Will is power, liberty to choose; law, in the sense here meant, is necessitating force, force which there is no possibility of resisting: these two things are mutually destructive. The being endowed with the faculty of will is his own law,—that is, he is a true causer, producing effects apart from any other cause.

The will may follow the dictate, and the last dictate of the understanding: in rational beings, who are true to their nature, the will always follows the dictates of the understanding and the conscience; because they are perfect, and so long as they are perfect, their powers act in harmony, and the moving principle is faithful to the design and meaning of its formation. But, in point of fact, the will in man often does not follow the decision of the understanding, and this is the very evil and sin, that it does not: in cases without number, in the large proportion of cases which the moral history of men presents, the will does not follow the last judgment, or any judgment at all of the understanding. It is unaccountable blindness to the most glaring facts of consciousness to assert that what a man wishes and chooses, he must at the moment judge best on the whole. On the very contrary, we maintain it, as the most undeniable fact, that he may not allow himself to judge, to use his understanding, or even to think, at all at the moment, but shall only

strongly feel and desire; he may forcibly suppress and put away from him every dictate of his judgment, and his judgment, if he listen to it for an instant, instead of favouring his choice, may be directly and vehemently opposed to it.

So also, when it is said, "the will is always as the prevailing inclination of the soul;" or, again, "it is always as the greatest apparent good;" or when this last is still farther explained, and it is said, "the will always follows that which, on the whole, at the moment, is most pleasing, most agreeable to it" (this, it is expressly avowed, is what is meant by the greatest apparent good), there is a sense in which every one of these different forms may be accepted, in which, indeed, they are only the merest truisms. Willing, choosing, does exhibit the prevailing inclination of the soul, does show what is on the whole most pleasing, most agreeable to it at the moment; in other words, what on the whole it prefers. But the question remains untouched, why is this, and not that, "the prevailing inclination," "the greatest apparent good," "the most pleasing, the most agreeable to the soul?" The man's will first gives to the motive which prevails all the force which it wields, and he only surrenders to a necessity which himself has created. Nothing is gained by a mere repetition of patent truisms; and an interpretation of the phenomena of volition, their ground, and their logical sequence, is as far to seek as ever. We need to be on our guard lest, in these familiar phrases, which are partially true, but are very far from being true universally, there be conveyed a one-sided and thoroughly false interpretation. The words "prevailing

inclination," "greatest apparent good," "most pleasing, most agreeable to the soul," are very general, even ambiguous. They may suggest, as here used they do suggest, what is thoroughly and palpably untenable.

On the one hand, when it is said a thing chosen must be the most pleasing, most agreeable to the man at the moment, we can only reply, certainly it must. His choosing it decisively proves this. But we ask, to what do you mean to say, the thing chosen must be most pleasing and agreeable? Is it to conscience and reason? This may be, and often is, glaringly untrue. A choice may be, and often is, utterly repugnant to conscience and reason; both may vehemently denounce it at the moment, or neither may be suffered to utter its voice. A choice has often no ground in judgment, or in moral conviction, and passion and feeling often for the time overmaster the understanding and the moral nature. The very essence of moral evil is, that it is violence wilfully and consciously done to the rightful governing powers of the soul.

On the other hand, if it be meant that the thing chosen must be most pleasing, agreeable to the appetites, the passions, the feelings; in general, to what we currently distinguish as the inclinations, this is no less glaringly untrue. The martyr at the stake deliberately chooses torture and death; but pain has not therefore changed its character to him; his nature, like that of every other human being, recoils from pain. But that which he shudders even to think of, which is inexpressibly repugnant to his feelings, and to his sentient being, he yet chooses, deliberately and with his whole soul determines and prefers to meet. The very highest virtue on this

earth is that which resists the solicitation of what is simply pleasing and agreeable, which crucifies appetite, passion, feeling, inclination, and, at all costs and at all hazards, obeys the voice of conscience and reason.

One other of the accepted conclusions of what we make bold to designate a false and pestilent metaphysics, may here be noticed—"The will is always determined by the strongest motive."

That influence, be it what it may, which at last overcomes the being, or, rather, with which he chooses to ally himself, is in point of fact, beyond all question, the strongest to him at the moment. He voluntarily, independently, makes it the strongest, and puts into it by his preference of it, the superior force which it acquires. It cannot surely be meant that in this way the real and essential worth and weight, the real, inherent, comparative force, of all the appeals which are addressed to the mind is ascertained? That motive which is actually adopted is the strongest in fact; but surely it cannot be meant that it must also beforehand be the strongest in itself, its essential force considered. On the contrary, it is certain that the strongest in fact is often the weakest in reality; the understanding may at the moment pronounce it to be the weakest, and the conscience may pronounce it to be the most wicked. It is the strongest in fact, simply because the man has chosen to attach himself to it, has accepted it and has refused the others. But that it is really and inherently the strongest, and that only because it is the strongest it commands, and cannot but command the will, is surely too monstrous to be believed. The very essence of crime is, that it is not necessary but voluntary.

The fact that the force to which the will yields it might and could have resisted but did not resist, in other words, that, by a higher exercise of the understanding and the conscience, it might and could have made a perfectly opposite choice, but did not; this, and nothing else, constitutes its disgrace and its crime.

If, in every instance, the motive to which the will yields in fact, be one to which it yields necessarily, to which it must and cannot but yield, then all human actions, however vicious or virtuous, are as inevitable as the falling of the rain or the movement of the planets. There can be neither virtue nor vice in the first any more than in the second, and a system of universal and unmitigated fatalism is the result.*

In the face of all this, consciousness proclaims, in the most unambiguous terms, that the motive, the influence or combination of influences, to which the voluntary agent yields, may be the weakest in reason and the wickedest in conscience. The design of his constitution is, that passion, and desire, and inclination, whencesoever arising, should be under the government of his higher nature; but it is left to him to choose whether this order shall be maintained or not. He is endowed with power over the determinations of his will, with perfect liberty to choose; and it is in the exercise of this power, this liberty, that he chooses it shall not be maintained. No reason, no cause can be assigned for this result except

* Hobbes' Essay on Liberty and Necessity (Manchester, 1839); Spinoza, Ethica, Prop. 32, corol. 1, 2: p. 63; also De Libertate Humana, vol. i.; and Principia Phil., de Vol. Dei, vol. ii. (Jena, 1802). It is passing strange that Spinoza, Hobbes, and Jonathan Edwards should, in the issue, be thoroughly at one.

himself—he chooses it: he ought to have, he might, he could have made a different choice, but he did not, simply and only because he would not.

Here is the first indispensable condition of responsibility. Men are voluntary beings, and it is just, therefore, and to this extent and no farther, that they are responsible beings. So far as the course they take is their choice, so far as they have been perfectly free to choose or refuse it, and have taken it simply because they chose it, so far but no farther can a reckoning justly be demanded of them. We are responsible for what is our own doing, and is left to our own option, but not for what is independent of us. That which my will neither causes nor can prevent, can, on no just ground, be charged to my account, and neither the merit nor the blame which it may involve can be attributed to me. That, on the other hand, which is truly of my choosing, which I freely wished and of my own accord originated, of which, therefore, I am strictly the causer, the voluntary causer, that brings upon me righteously either its punishment or its reward. Power, in the sense of entire liberty to determine our choice, is the necessary condition and the exact measure of responsibility.

II. But while man exercises the liberty to choose for himself, is it equally certain that he is so endowed by his Maker, as to be justly responsible for his use of this freedom? Moral power is not simply liberty of choice; it supposes adequate capacity of using this liberty. This is the second indispensable condition of responsibility. A maniac or an idiot has his likings and dislikings, his preferences, his choices, but his ability, rationally and morally, to choose, is nil, and responsibility cannot justly attach to him. Voluntariness is an attribute of the lower animals; will in them is as real as it is in us, but it is limited in its range by their nature, their endowments, and their circumstances. Following out a legitimate analogy, we can believe that among human beings there may be great specific diversities of moral power with an entire generic similarity. All men alike are endowed with freedom of choice, with liberty to choose for themselves; but the ability to use this liberty may be, and in point of fact is found to be, exceedingly various.

It is very clear that men themselves may and do injure essentially, and even permanently, their own moral independence and strength. For such injury they are alone responsible. It is possible to impair our intellect, to prepare for ourselves a condition of ignorance and imbecility; it is possible to misguide and corrupt the desires, and, as a consequence of this, we shall have, not less

freedom or less power to choose, but immensely less ability to choose aright. And every false and vicious choice which a man forms, every choice at variance with the true ends of the moral organisation, is an injury to the faculty of will itself; but an injury for which, with all its consequences, the wrong-doer himself is entirely accountable.

It is a law of our mental nature that habit adds a force, ever accumulating, whether to good or to evil principles, above what belongs to themselves simply. When in any instance the lower desires, instead of being resisted, are suffered to govern, the difficulty of resistance to them is thereafter palpably increased, and increases ever the more, the longer we succumb to it. By long habit, it is quite possible so to weaken the power of the higher nature, and proportionally to augment the clamorous strength of the lower nature, that an individual may be said to have substituted in the place of his power of choice, a kind of moral necessity. But it is his own work, wholly and only the work of his will, and can be the work of none else.

There is even a kind of physical necessity, under the tyranny of which many bring themselves; but they bring themselves; of their own choice alone, they bring themselves under this cruel tyranny. The drunkard, for example, by long indulgence forms habits of intemperance which are at last bodily almost more than mental. He creates a state of positive disease, and at last his excesses are required to satisfy a physical craving over which his mind has lost all control. In this state, under an imperious physical necessity, he may not be held

responsible for his acts of intemperance at the time; but he is wholly responsible for bringing himself into this condition, and all the consequences resulting from it are legitimately thrown back upon him.

But it may be asked, is there no such thing as involuntary, and therefore irresponsible, moral incapacity? Nay more, is there no such thing as actual moral malformation, involuntary and therefore irresponsible malformation? On the one hand, let us imagine a condition of semi-barbarism, though in the centre of a surrounding civilisation and a surrounding Christianity, a condition in which human beings grow up without education, without knowledge, except such as is gained through the senses and flows into them spontaneously as every-day experience; in which they constantly breathe a polluted moral atmosphere, and witness scenes that are only shocking to right reason and to all morality. No enlightened and candid person will deny, that such beings deserve to be called voluntary and responsible, in a far more limited sense than others. It admits of no question that their actions, almost their opinions and their principles, instead of being deliberately chosen by themselves, seem to be virtually determined for them.* To a certain extent, this is a seeming rather than a reality. In the most morally deplorable conditions of human life, the vitality of conscience, and the marked distinction between those who obey and those who trample upon it, are impressively demonstrated. It is

* Part of the difficulty here is connected with the peculiar representationary, hereditary constitution under which human beings, as a race, are placed. This difficulty is treated at large at pp. 190-5.

found that from earliest youth, some have listened to the good, the Divine which was in them, have inwardly shrunk from much of the evil which was ever before their eyes, and although in their outward ways and speech, necessarily assimilated to those around them, have yet clung with marvellous tenacity to what was true and right. At the same time for them and for all in such circumstances the modifying effect of their life on their moral ability, and therefore on their responsibility, can scarcely be exaggerated. In their state of ignorance, and with prejudices and habits certainly to some extent the effect of circumstances which they did not create and could not control, they are indeed as free, have as much power to choose, as ever, but the power of choosing aright is glaringly and wofully circumscribed. They are not accountable for the fact being thus, because it originates in causes out of themselves, over which they had no command. It is recognised at once, that their responsibility must be measured by their power, and this being obviously limited, as compared with that of other men, their responsibility also is proportionally circumscribed. So far as they have received from their Maker, and so far as, under his providence, it has been in their power to retain and exercise a capacity of choosing for themselves, according to the law of reason and conscience; that is to say, so far as their principles, their opinions, and their actions are deliberate and voluntary, and not the necessary growth of their circumstances and their discipline,—so far they are perfectly accountable, but no farther. There are, and there must be, in this way, gradations of responsibility; and the patent fact

is that these gradations of responsibility must correspond with the diversities of intellectual and moral condition, endowment and development among human beings.

On the other hand, we cannot be ignorant of the fact, that physical constitution and temperament exert a powerful influence over the exercise of reason and of conscience, and therefore also over the determinations of the will. Passion, in several of its modes, is connected with the condition of the blood, the brain, the nervous system, and the physical organisation generally. It is the appointed office of the higher, especially the moral, powers of the soul to regulate and govern the lower appetites and affections; and for the human race as a whole the governing power is consciously adequate; and the lawless outbreaks of passion, in whatever form, are so far resistible, that they are owing solely to the voluntary perversity of the being, who could and might, but would not, command and quell them. The violent rage to which men resign themselves, the discontent, the acerbity, the jealousy, the envy, and the fleshly lusts which they indulge, are not physical misfortunes, but moral crimes, which they deliberately perpetrate, and were endowed with abundant power to avoid. But there are, without doubt, tendencies to acts, otherwise meriting to be called crimes, which are physically irresistible. The tendency, arising solely from bodily, constitutional causes, to madness, is an extreme verification of this position. The mind may become thoroughly deranged; the reason, and of course the conscience, may lose their power; but the individual is a sufferer, not a criminal. And much short of this issue, wherever a

tendency is physically invincible, wherever it has arisen from causes which we did not create, and over which we have no control, there and to this extent responsibility has certainly ceased.*

These principles rest upon the foundation of immutable rectitude, and no reasonings, however apparently profound, and however logically constructed, must be suffered to shake our faith in their validity. The sense of responsibility is a universal consciousness; but this is not more sure nor more widely extended in conscious humanity than is the sense of moral liberty and of moral ability. The two are inseparable. Where we are conscious that, without fault of ours, we were not equal to any exigency which arose, that either an action was not the result of our choice, or that, owing to causes which we did not create, and could not control, we were incapable of choosing otherwise, precisely so far as we are conscious of this, we are troubled by no sense of guilt, and made happy by no sense of merit. But the sense of guilt we cannot throw off, and, on the other hand, the delight of an approving conscience we cannot

* I have not here referred at all to the doctrine of original sin. That which is absolutely universal (and sin is absolutely universal), must be original. The Scripture saith, "There is not a just man upon earth that doeth good and sinneth not." But artificial theology has introduced a fearful addition to this statement, namely, that we all now receive a tainted nature from God, as a punishment inflicted on the whole race, because of the first man's sin. Were this so, no descendant of Adam could be justly responsible for anything he does or fails to do. But nothing impure can descend from the Holy One. Fallibility is inseparable from a finite nature, else holy man and holy angel had never sinned. This subject is more fully discussed in Section VI. of this chapter. See pp. 99, 171, 182, 225.

suppress, where we feel that we were first free, and second, so endowed as to have been able, to have left a thing undone, or to have done it, and that we did it or left it undone simply because we chose to do it or to leave it undone. In spite of fallacious theories of physical and moral necessity, human nature proclaims with one voice, moral responsibility based on moral freedom and moral ability. In the profound but clear depths of his consciousness, man finds it revealed that he must give account of himself to God ; but the reason, the ground of this announcement is made known simultaneously with it. It is this, that his will is his own, and ought to be, and might be, under his control ; that he is free and able to choose or to refuse, according to his own conviction and desire. The moral good and the moral evil of his course, therefore, but only therefore, thus far, and only thus far, are righteously attributable to him.

SECTION III.

MORAL EVIL, THE VOLUNTARY ABUSE OF MORAL POWER.

MATERIAL AND MORAL UNIVERSE.—RESISTING FORCE IN ONE, NOT IN OTHER.—MEN, PERSONS, NOT THINGS.—CRIME, ITS REALITY AND SPREAD.—DILETTANTE MORALITY.—MORAL ANTITHESES.—PHILOSOPHICAL NECESSITY.—LEIBNITZ, SOAME JENYNS.—MATTER, SEAT OF EVIL.—HIGHER LAWS OF MAN'S BEING.—ESSENCE OF CRIME, VOLUNTARINESS.—SUSPENSION OF LAW OF GRAVITATION.—MORAL DISORDER.—MYSTERY OF CREATED WILL.—ALMIGHTY RESISTED.—MORAL POWER ABUSED.

THE contrast between the material and the moral sphere is deeply affecting. The physical universe is a magnificent harmony. Our planetary system—the sun with the planets and their satellites for ever peacefully fulfilling their distinct offices—is a beautiful revelation of order and of law, and each of the planetary systems that enrich immensity is another such exquisite revelation. Perhaps each star in the mighty concave, each atom of starry dust, each speck of starry vapour, and each of the myriads on myriads of luminous points which no human eye, no telescopic power has reached, but whose existence science infers with undoubting confidence, is not a unit but a system. Perhaps these multitudinous systems, each perfect in itself, are not separate and isolated, but beautifully arranged, the one to the other, units in a grander whole, giving forth distinct and varying notes of a mighty symphony, all blending to produce a full diapason of song, the music of the revolving spheres, the matchless melody that ravishes the ear of God.

Moral, unlike material harmony, though destined at last to be, exists not now. But the spiritual universe has its ideal, ere long to be realised; and it is not, even now, though it seems to us to be, without law and without aim.

Its destined harmony is as perfect as that of the visible creation, and unutterably more beauteous: and tokens and evidences of this future are not wanting even amidst present and far-spread disorder. Those grand and eternal principles, in which rational and moral being is founded, are no less real than is the universal law of gravitation in the sphere of nature. Righteousness, truth, and love are the ordained governing laws of created mind. The eternal fact is, that all blessedness, all wisdom, all glory, all safety, all life (in this region) are identified with the reign of these principles. The slightest departure from them is inevitably productive of evil and can be productive of nothing else. No power in the universe could make it otherwise, and no volition, no act of the Highest was needed to make it as it is. Created mind is formed to be in harmony with these laws; in order to its very being, as a constituted existence, it must be in harmony with them: it loses being, it parts with what enters into its essence, it deranges its constitution, it strikes at its very life, in departing from them.* These principles in their highest form, are impersonated in the Supreme, and are His inalienable possessions. He is the Uncreated Subject, they are the uncreated modes. They constitute His essence, so far as it can be known by us. He is righteousness, is truth, is love, and that which He is, is infinitely and unchangeably beautiful in His sight. Will in God, eternally free and spontaneous, is infinite inclination to all good, infinite love of all good. No cause from within, and none from without, can ever arise to produce change. Ever and only there exists eternal

* See p. 182.

cause for permanence. And created minds are designed likenesses of the Uncreated, the only likenesses which creation affords. They are the offspring of God,* children of the Universal Father, bearing, as far as is possible to creatures, the image of the Creator. Their nature is after the uncreated pattern, and their destiny is to become like Him from whom they sprang, and peacefully and joyously to rise into His image. There is an ideal harmony to which the moral universe is appointed, and the constitution of moral being and its governing laws predict, though they have not secured it. They have not secured it, it has not been secured; the harmony is but ideal, not actual; and the fundamental reason lies in this, that men are persons not things, not merely acted upon by influences, however holy and sovereign, but themselves consciously, voluntarily determining and acting.

The material creation consists of things, not persons—unconscious, involuntary, powerless things. The laws which govern them are obeyed implicitly, uninterruptedly; they cannot be disobeyed. Strictly speaking, they are neither obeyed nor disobeyed. They are simply the resistless Divine power exerted in a region where all is passive, and where resistance is impossible. Irregularity in such a region could originate only in the great Mover himself, in a defect of his power, or in a change in his purpose. But in the moral universe there are other movers and other causers, besides the Almighty, other wills besides His, over which His physical omnipotence can have no control. They might be crushed, annihilated in a moment by His power; but so long as they

* Γένος τοῦ Θεοῦ, Acts xvii. 29.

exist as wills, physical omnipotence has no relation to them. A human mind is endowed with a power which the Creator can influence by his truth and his spirit, but which even He cannot necessitate. It is the abuse of this mysterious power which has filled the world with all the varieties and with an overwhelming amount of suffering and crime.

With those who deny the reality of moral evil,—who see nothing worse in human agency than the necessary effect of circumstances, or of unavoidable ignorance or weakness, who make no essential, moral distinction between deliberate murder and self-sacrificing kindness, and who maintain that the one entails no guilt, and the other springs from no virtue, we can here have no controversy. They have first to learn the elementary principles of moral truth. All the languages of the many-tongued earth are full of words, that not only have no meaning, but are deliberate falsehoods, unless they involve the distinction between conscious crimes or vices and invincible weaknesses, or faults of judgment. The laws of all nations are a pitiful burlesque; the daily conversation of men is a practised deception on one another; the natural, the deepest convictions of men are a cruel mockery, except on this ground.

Not only the reality, but the sweeping extent of moral evil is so palpable, that they who do not acknowledge it, must be either blind or insane, or they must avow what they know to be untrue. Injustice, falsehood, treachery, licentiousness, cruelty, extend wide and far and by the unanimous verdict of the sane world, they are not weaknesses, not ignorances, not stupidities, not unavoidable

errors, merely or chiefly; they are crimes, dark, detestable, wilful crimes.

Some of the more refined of the early English Deists, copying not the noblest of the ethical schools of Greece, represent sin, as an offence against good taste rather than against conscience.* They at least seem to construe it into a violation of the moral unities, a defect of æsthetic culture, an obtuseness of the sense of the beautiful. The simple but unanswerable objection to all this is, that it falls immeasurably below the facts of experience and of consciousness. There is a moral taste, and crime is its depravation; there is a moral beauty, and crime may be pronounced deformity and ugliness. But there is something in it far darker and more hateful, which this mode of representation cannot convey. The mind of the transgressor is chargeable with a kind, and an amount, of demerit, which it is worse than trifling, to characterise in the terms of an unreal or dilettante morality When reason and conscience are violated, and the Great God of all Himself resisted and defied, is it to be borne that this should be handed over to be judged according to the laws of taste, and the insipid dicta of a refined cultivation? The physician would exhibit neither his good sense nor his good feeling, who should describe a dangerous, perhaps mortal wound, by saying that its form was inartistic, and its general appearance was out of keeping with the laws of the beautiful.

It is of much deeper consequence to understand that something like Swedenborg's doctrine of correspondences, or rather like Jacob Boehme's notion of the antithetic

* Shaftesbury's "Characteristics."

and dualistic forms in nature, has found its way into the region of ethical speculation. Male and female, body and soul, day and night, heat and cold, summer and winter, north and south, attraction and repulsion, positive and negative poles, are among the many contraries of which nature is the repository, and to which the character of necessity seems to belong. We can hardly conceive nature without them, they seem so essential to its completeness. A one-sided creation would be unsymmetrical and monotonous. It is argued that this characteristic must be no less essential in the moral than in the material creation; there must be moral antitheses, and a moral as well as a material polarity. Evil and good must be alike necessary, and together must constitute a completed moral universe. It can scarcely be doubted, that that ruthless logic of Germany which proclaims the identity of contraries,* and with equal ease makes nothing something, and something nothing, and something and nothing together a reality which neither alone could be, has helped to extend a theory which is perverse in every region, but in morals must be especially fraught with deadly mischief. One grieves to meet ever and again, at the present day, in writers of a mystic and dreamy genius, the influence of a lurking idea that evil is not really evil, but is essential to good. Like darkness and light, evil is necessary to reveal the true nature, to impress with the worth, and to deepen the glow, of good. Both are alike indispensable, and belong to the necessary constitution of

* Hegel's Encyclopädie-Erster Theil, die Wissenschaft der Logik. Heidelberg, 1827. See also Spinoza, Ethica, vol. i. of Works. Jena, 1802.

the universe. But surely two things at the least are forgotten here. First, evil cannot be the necessary complement of good, else the Great Being is imperfect. "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all:" there is at least one nature in which evil is not needed to constitute perfect excellence. Second, on this theory the mingling and the conflict of evil with good must be everlasting; as a necessity in the nature of things its termination is impossible. Sorrowful destiny for created being, and even for the God of all, were such the dismal prospect!

But are we not compelled, it is asked, in conceiving a universe, to conceive also along with it the existence of evil? Without confounding evil with good, or imagining that it is inevitable as the complement of good, are we not yet obliged to presume its existence?* Gradation, and always limitation, in created beings, we cannot escape. Even if we imagine not different races differently endowed, but one race, constituted on a common principle, be the endowments of this race what they may, they must be limited; in one direction and another, in all directions to some extent, they must ever fall below perfection. Limitation, defect of good, is not this evil? And limitation in created being there must be; the sufficient reason for this is ever found in its essential constitution. No sane man will deny that limitation means imperfection; and as certainly imperfection is an evil; but the question is, can it also be called a crime? Herein lies the fatal objection to this

* Soame Jenyns' Inquiry, London, 1757. King's Essay on the Origin of Evil. Cambridge, 1758. Leibnitz, Essais de Thod. Amsterdam, 1712, pp. 112—125.

mode of representing sin. Moral evil is not a negative, but a dire and malignant positive. The transgressor is not conscious of mere imperfection, above all, of an imperfection necessarily belonging to his being, without fault of his. On the contrary, he is perfectly conscious, not of yielding to inevitable limitations, but of wilfully misusing sacred powers, conscious of doing something which he ought not to have done, and which he did simply because he chose to do it.

The notion of matter being the seat and source of evil, the notion of eternal matter and an eternal God, and of a dualism in the universe and in each individual, is very ancient, very natural, and, on some sides, even suggestive of truth. This much is certainly true, that a large class of human crimes have undeniably a material origin, and that a large number besides can be resolved more or less remotely into material causes. But when it is maintained, that sin is nothing else than the revolt of the material against the rational nature, the position is assailable on two grounds. First, the possibility of moral evil in purely spiritual natures is denied. Second, consciousness assures every human being that there are crimes, of which he is guilty, that are not dependent in their origin, their motive, or any of their relations, on his material organisation. But were the position generalised, and were it maintained that sin is always the revolt of the lower against the higher nature of man, including in the lower all except conscience and reason, we are prepared to accept the terms as a true and comprehensive statement. In every instance of wrong-doing, the voice of reason and conscience has been overborne, and something lower than

they has been obeyed. Crime is always a conscious departure not only from God, but from wisdom, from purity, from rectitude, and from love. In the act of sin, whether internal or external, the voluntary agent has either not suffered the higher governing powers of his mind to speak, or he has perversely disregarded their voice and chosen some other guidance for the time. He is free to choose for himself, that is one side of his being, but he is not therefore released from the everlasting imperative, "the ought," that is the other side. His will is and must be its own law, but he is not therefore irresponsible; on the contrary, he is on this very account responsible, and in the highest imaginable degree.

Man is under law. With all his powers and endowments of every kind, that of will included, he is under the obligations of law, and must render account of the use he has made of every gift wherewith his nature has been enriched. Power has been entrusted to him, but not irresponsible power. It is put to him of his own free choice to determine his course, whether by the higher or by the lower principles of his nature, but what that course ought to be is no uncertainty and no contingency. The path of safety, of honour, of wisdom, of moral excellence, is set luminously before him. He has guides within which point to that path with no unsteady hand, and it is at his peril if he abandon the holy guidance and turn to darkness and evil. But it is left entirely to his option. Moral evil is, and must always be, the free choice, the conscious product of the human will. It has many sides and admits of as many different definitions, but this characteristic of perfect voluntariness must enter into them all.

In its first and nearest aspect it is resistance to conscience and reason. But these, again, are the very voice of God in man, and it is thus violation of the Supreme Will. The nature and will of The Most High reveal the eternal and immutable constitution of things, and it thus becomes rebellion against moral order and law, against the essential and necessary principles of the intelligent moral universe. But in whichever of its many aspects it be regarded, its essential feature remains the same; sin always is, and can only be, wilful abuse of moral liberty and moral power. The perfect voluntariness of moral evil, of all moral evil, is a first, a fundamental principle. The wrong-doer is conscious to himself, at the moment, that what he does, he does of his own choice and by his own fault. In the act of crime, he is as convinced as he is of his own existence, that no foreign compulsion is exerted upon him, and that no condition of mere invincible passivity, except by himself, is induced within him; convinced that he might have and that he could have done otherwise, and that the only reason why he did wrong was that he wished, chose, and was free to do wrong. It is its voluntariness, and its voluntariness only, that constitutes his deed a crime. He knew that it was wrong. Conscience and reason, his ordained guides, proclaimed it wrong. But it was left to him to make his own election, and he was unfaithful to the trust. The voluntary abuse of moral power is, and alone is, moral evil.

Profound and awful is this mystery of created will: in its very nature it is capable of resisting the Creator; it has, in fact, resisted Him! The power which He conferred, has been wilfully, wickedly abused, in order to

violate His laws and to disturb and embroil His government. Moral liberty, degenerating to licentiousness, moral power wilfully perverted, is moral evil, alone is moral evil; the origin, the sole origin, of this plague in the universe, is the voluntary abuse of power and freedom by the created being.

If we could conceive one of the planets by some means able to overcome the combined action of the centripetal and centrifugal forces, if we could conceive an immense number of planets, belonging to various systems, breaking loose and rushing lawlessly forth into space, coming into collision with one another and with the globes and systems that pursued their ordained course, this terrific conflict and crash of worlds would feebly represent the vast disorder, the havoc and the ruin, of the moral universe. A holy privilege, a dignity of the most sacred kind, has become an almost unmitigated curse. The record of the present condition of the world, the history of all nations and of all past ages, is one of manifold crime and of suffering as varied, the never-failing consequent of crime.

Man, man alone, in defiance of his Maker, is the creator of evil on this earth.

SECTION IV.

CREATOR INFINITELY OPPOSED TO MORAL EVIL.

I. PHYSICAL EVIL CONCEIVABLE. — MORAL EVIL UNALTERABLY, INFINITELY HATEFUL.—LANGUAGE OF EARLIER THEOLOGY.— II. MOTIVE IN CREATION.—NO ULTERIOR END, HIGHER THAN HIGHEST END. — BENEVOLENCE, MORAL EXCELLENCE, OWN END. — NECESSITY OF CREATION? — COUSIN. — RESISTLESS, CREATIVE LOVINGNESS.—III. UNIVERSE INTELLIGENT, MORAL, VOLUNTARY.—SIN INPREVENTABLE. — HOW SO? — CREATION, DIVINE CROSS. — IV. WILL, CANNOT BE NECESSITATED. — RESISTANCE TO GOD A DAILY FACT.—FIRST FALSE CHOICE.— "GOD COULD PREVENT, AND DID NOT."—EDWARDS.—V. FOREKNOWLEDGE AND PREDETERMINATION.—GOD ETERNAL ANTAGONIST OF MORAL EVIL.

GOD'S ANTAGONISM TO EVIL.

IT is quite conceivable that a Good Being might sanction suffering, if by this means higher moral advantage, higher wisdom, higher purity, higher spiritual strength, perfection and blessedness of life,—were secured to the sufferer. It is quite conceivable that a Good Being might even sanction suffering, involving no permanent injury in the case of one creature, for the sake of higher moral perfection and blessedness to other creatures, though not to itself. In this case difficulty, to some extent, would be created; and, in spite of ourselves, we should feel that a certain shade rested on the providence of the All-Perfect, which it would be a welcome relief to be able entirely to clear away.

But no amount of good, not an eternity of physical or moral good to myriads of beings could justify the existence of moral evil—supposing it possible to have prevented it. An impiety, a falsehood, an injustice, a cruelty, is simply a sheer abomination, execrable and damnable. It is not only violation of the dictates of conscience and of reason, it is direct resistance to God, and strikes at the eternal principles and at the very existence of the moral universe. Be its amount what it may, be it ever so minute, ever so trivial, as we might speak, eternal rec-

titude and eternal reason cry out against it, and declare that it must not, shall not be, that nothing can ever justify it, that it is only and wholly and unchangeably wrong. Every mind in harmony with conscience and reason abhors it, can do no other than abhor it utterly. Whatever consequences it may be possible to produce from it, it must not be; and even the suggestion of consequences is a new offence, as if this were a thing that could admit of being calculated. Evil, moral evil, is moral evil still, if it should lead to ever so much good, and is only to be resisted and detested; no vindication of it, on any ground, can be listened to for a moment; it must not be, if it be possible to prevent it.

It is the instinct of reverence and love which impels to the belief, that, with unmitigated abhorrence, the awful Guardian of rectitude and truth, in whose nature the reigning laws of the moral universe have their foundation, and of whose essence they are the eternal modes, must regard the remotest approach to sin. Be the difficulties what they may, on other sides, be they for ever insoluble, there is no difficulty here, and there must be no hesitation. Wherever, whenever moral evil arose, even in the minutest conceivable form, The Supreme must have been infinitely opposed to it. It is of God's very essence to be opposed to what is morally wrong: we should alter, we should destroy His being, were we to suppose anything else. There cannot be two wills in Him: His nature cannot be divided against itself, so as in one aspect of it to be opposed, and in another inclined, to essential evil. If on any ground we imagine anything but unchangeable abhorrence of sin in the Divine mind, any

secret disposition to its introduction, when it was possible to prevent it, there would then be no trust for creatures evermore; in effect there would be no God; the infinitely Pure and Good, the foundation of immutable virtue, the object of unmixed veneration, would be gone. Creatures, in perpetrating crime, injustice, falsehood, impurity, cruelty, would then be only carrying out, in however indirect a sense, the secret but real inclination or intimation of their Maker. There would thenceforth be no such thing as sin to them. What He is, what is done by Him, in His sphere, it could not be criminal for them to be and to do, in their sphere. If He be not wholly and only opposed to moral evil, if it be possible for Him, on any ground, to allow it, though He could consistently prevent it, then they also may calculate consequences, and may do evil that good may come.

One recoils with unmingled horror from the language often employed on this subject by an earlier theology, the bane of which, as of much that is even now current, it is not difficult to perceive was a false philosophy and a vicious dialectic. "If it be objected," says Soame Jenyns,* "that this makes God the author of sin, I answer, God is, and must be, the author of everything; and to say that anything is, or happens, independently of the first cause, is to say that something exists or happens, without any cause at all. . . . If misery brings with it its utility, why may not wickedness?

> 'If storms and earthquakes break not Heaven's design,
> Why then a Borgia or a Catiline?'

* Inquiry into the Nature and Origin of Evil. Letter 4th. London, 1757.

Wherefore it ought always to be considered that, though sin in us, who see no farther than the evils it produces, is evil, and justly punished, yet in God, who sees the causes and connections of all things, and the necessity of its admission, that admission is no evil at all, and that necessity a sufficient vindication of His goodness." Even Jonathan Edwards, betrayed by a love of metaphysical subtlety, shall say,* "There is no inconsistency in supposing that God may hate a thing, as it is in itself and considered as evil, and yet that it may be His will that it should come to pass, considering all consequences. I believe there is no person of good understanding who will venture to say, he is certain that it is impossible it should be best, taking in the whole compass and extent of existence, and all consequences in the endless series of events, that there should be such a thing as moral evil in the world. And if so, it will certainly follow that an infinitely wise being, who always chooses what is best, must choose that there should be such a thing; and if so, then such a choice is not an evil, but a wise and holy choice; and if so, then providence, which is agreeable to such a choice is a wise and holy providence. Men do will sin, as sin, and so are the authors and actors of it; they love it as sin, and for evil ends and purposes. God does not will sin as sin, or for the sake of anything evil; though it be His pleasure so to order things that, He permitting, sin will come to pass for the sake of the great good, that by His disposal shall be the consequence. His willing to order things so that evil should come to pass, for the sake of the contrary good, is no argument that He does not hate evil

* Freedom of the Will, Part IV., section 9. London, 1818.

as evil." It amounts to this: the Most High, in effect, wills crime to be perpetrated, though He could have consistently prevented it; this is His pleasure for the sake of a great good afterwards to arise, He chooses that there shall be such a thing.

These words are most dishonouring to the Ever-Blessed Being, and utterly unfounded. Instead of "not venturing to say, that it is impossible the existence of moral evil should be best for the universe on the whole," it seems to me tremendously impious to venture to say anything else—always supposing, that it was possible to prevent its entrance. It is of the essential nature of God to be opposed, not officially and rectorally, but in the deepest depths of his Being, to sin, that is to impiety, injustice, impurity, and cruelty. In His mind no consideration could justify the slightest departure, even for an instant, from eternal and immutable rectitude, purity, and truth, if it could have been prevented; and the contemplation of such a departure by the Great Being, with anything but unmixed abhorrence, would involve a destruction of his His very essence. That the Only Holy One should will, decree the introduction of crime, that is of violence to conscience and reason, truth and right; that He should choose it as on the whole best when He could have prevented it; that He should even permit it, in the sense which this word is intended to convey; that at the moment when it in fact entered the universe, although He could have prevented it, He withdrew, and, for the sake of some prospective good, suffered it to enter, so that while He did nothing actively, He yet did everything indirectly, and on the whole evinced that the issue was

not contrary to His will;—by whatever reasonings such positions are upheld, they strike at the very foundation and the soul of virtue, and are fatal to the honour, the moral character, and the very being of the Most High. They must be false, else there is no real difference between right and wrong, and no Eternal Being whom creatures can worship and love. The clearest, most compact, and best constructed arguments can have no weight, no force here: we may be quite unable to detect and expose their fallacy, but they must be unsound. This at least is true, if there be no other truth in the universe,—The Holy One was, is, ever will, ever must be, infinitely opposed to all that is morally wrong.

II. But how then could the accursed thing be introduced into the creation?

It is necessary to go further back still, and to suggest a yet earlier question—wherefore was there a creation at all? wherefore the putting forth of creative power if it must entail this terrific consequence? Had there been no creation, there had been no moral evil. In the beginning The Eternal was alone, a plenitude, not a vacuity, an infinite plenitude; a consciousness, an activity, a capacity and a fountain of blessedness, infinitely Self-sufficient. This was the eternal fact. But it is not now the only fact. Being is no longer a unity. The One still is, unchanged and unchangeable. But there are also, The Many. Wherefore this new fact? What is the final cause of creation?

The transition, from the Uncreated to the created, is incomprehensible by the human intellect. What creation is, how it was possible, and how it became a realised

fact, are incomprehensible; and it is confessed on all hands that they are absolutely incomprehensible. Shall we then imagine, that, though we be ignorant of the nature and the mode of this stupendous fact, we may nevertheless understand its primitive reason and motive? Shall we think to unveil the transcendent secret at that moment when, according to our conceptions, the eternal uniformity was interrupted, and when a new mode of being, absolutely incomprehensible by us, was first introduced? Shall we think to grasp all the views which were present to God, extending from the unbeginning past to the unending future, to fathom all His purposes and to analyse all His motives? If anywhere, at least here we must resolutely abjure dogmatical interpretation. Whatever is put forth, must be put forth only as conjectural and partial, belonging far more to the surface than to the depths of the subject.

"God can have no higher end in anything than Himself,"—so it has been often, epigrammatically and with much confidence, asserted. The aphorism is true in itself, but it is in great part inapplicable here, and, misapplied, it becomes a calumny on the Great Being. In the noblest—the moral—sphere of activity, to have no ulterior end, is higher than to have the highest end. To uphold rectitude and truth, for the sake of the advantage which may result from them, is not to be virtuous. A man is not just whose governing motive is to secure the advantage that results from a just line of conduct; he is only prudent, not virtuous. Virtue must be loved for its own sake, and obeyed, because it is loved. Wisdom contemplates ends, and is determined by their elevation

and their fitness; but virtue is its own end, and, as virtue, is destroyed by the entertainment, at the moment, of any end besides. Moral excellence of every kind finds its highest reason in itself alone, and no longer exists, so far as its prime motive is supplied from any foreign source. And this is pre-eminently true of the virtue of love. A generous, benevolent being, is one that acts, first of all, solely, from internal impulse. Why does such a being seek the good of others, even sacrifice himself for their sake? No primitive reason can be assigned except the pure force of the principle of love; you cannot account for his course on the ground of wisdom and prudence; if it could be so interpreted, it would then cease to be what it is. He has, originally, no ulterior end in view; if he had, the essential character of his act would that moment be changed: a generous, loving nature, an internal force to which he freely yields, impels him; this is the highest and the utmost that can be said.

With all possible emphasis we repeat, that in the noblest sphere of activity, to have no predetermined end is higher than to have the highest end. The moral, which finds its ground in itself alone, is far above the merely intellectual, which contemplates ends and calculates consequences. The infinitely Wise Being beholds every object in its entire nature, relations, and consequences, and, in the exercise of His wisdom, pursues the noblest and loftiest ends; but we rise to a loftier elevation, when we conceive the Uncreated Nature, glowing from within itself with rectitude, purity, and truth, and governed solely by the internal force of these majestic principles. And yet loftier still we rise, when, in that Nature, we

conceive pure benevolence and generosity, welling up from the infinite depths, and gushing forth in resistless energy to bless. If we could account for this, except by itself, if we could find a predetermined end, even the highest end, and thereby show that it was not purely and perfectly spontaneous, we should essentially alter its character, and should destroy all its worth as pure love.

The Glory of The Highest is eternally secure. Everything that He does must inevitably reveal what He is, and commend Him to the veneration and love of His creatures; but it is not glorifying, but dishonouring, to Him, to imagine that He must have an ulterior end in everything, and especially that that end must be Himself. In all the outgoings of His Moral Nature, the end, the motive force, lies primarily and chiefly in that Nature itself. In all the overflowings of His benevolence, He can have no higher end than that which springs from this pure fountain. He loves. Why? Wherefore? Because He loves, because this is His very essence, because His nature is an infinitely loving nature, and finds its delight in producing happiness, not in the low and limited sense in which we often speak of it, but in the sense of real blessedness, the blessedness connected with exalted intellectual and moral excellence. Were He acting primarily with a view to a predetermined end, and that end Himself, He could no longer be pure benevolence. He might be wise and He might be just, promoting also the highest good of His creatures, but He would no longer be the being of living, disinterested, unquenchable Love.

Is it unreasonable to conjecture that, perhaps here, a hint towards the solution of the problem of creation may

be found? It may not and cannot yield a perfect and all-inclusive interpretation. The problem, in its entireness, is necessarily insoluble. But, as a conjectural and partial exposition, this may not be inadmissible; it may not in itself be unnatural, not unsuited to human modes of thinking, not contradictory to other established principles; perhaps it may even possess more of verisimilitude, and afford greater satisfaction, and securer rest to conscience and reason, than other suggestions for a like purpose. The idea of a necessity of creation, broadly and baldly asserted, appears, at first sight, incompatible with the freedom of the Almighty Creator. In the very fact of creation, it is involved that this seemed good to infinite rectitude, wisdom, and love, and that which seemed good to infinite perfection, we may venture to think it was morally impossible for the Almighty not to bring to pass. But when this kind of reasoning is extended, and when, in such language as that of M. Cousin, it is asserted, that "God, if he be a cause, can create, and if he be an absolute cause, cannot but create . . . . his eminent characteristic being an absolute creative force, which cannot but pass into action, it follows, not that creation is possible, but that it is necessary,"* we feel instinctively that the limits of reverent and diffident speculation have been transgressed. We may be unable to detect a single flaw in the reasoning; it is even quite possible that there may be a measure of truth in it, but that which it brings

* Cours de Philosophie, Paris, 1828, V^me^. Leçon: "Dieu, s'il est une cause, peut créer, et s'il est une cause absolue, il ne peut pas ne pas créer . . . . . Son caractère éminent étant une force créatrice absolue, qui ne peut pas ne pas passer à l'acte, il suit, non que la création est possible, mais qu'elle est nécessaire."

out we are so little able to comprehend, and especially so little able to reconcile with other fixed convictions, that no practical use can be made of it, and it seems more modest, if not more wise, to stop short of it.

Perhaps the same difficulties, in equal force, do not bear against the suggestion which has been hazarded, that the final cause of the creation, at once the impelling force in the act and its end, was the irrepressible lovingness of the Divine Nature. In that nature, love can never be at variance with infinite wisdom and infinite rectitude, or with any of the Divine Perfections, but must ever be illustrative of them all. "The Uncreated," in all the movements of His Being, is a harmony, a unity; and each attribute in its manifestation is under the law of all the rest. But we may properly conceive now one and now another specially put forth. In that stupendous change, which was realised in creation, we presume to imagine that the reigning power was benevolence. If there be a necessity of creation at all, it seems most befitting to picture the necessity springing out of an infinitely loving nature. For ever and ever, gushed up with mighty force the infinite desire to produce blessedness and glory; welling from beneath, irrepressibly, irresistibly, it must flow forth, it must find vent for itself. It did. God spake, ineffable, irrepressible love spake, and creation was. Creative power has been put forth, the universe exists. To our conceptions, the necessity for this lying in the highest grounds of rectitude and wisdom finds its reason highest of all in the energy of uncreated benevolence. Had there been no creation, there could have been no moral evil. But to our con-

ceptions, necessity there must have been, that a creation should exist, else it had never existed, necessity in some sense, on some grounds, though we can never hope thoroughly to penetrate them. With greatest peace of mind, we fall back on the necessity of an infinite and overflowing love, a quenchless desire to fill immensity with all possible forms of purity and joy.

III. A further question arises, Why is the creation such as actually exists?

Had there been only a universe of matter, the introduction of moral evil would have been not less impossible, than had there been no creation at all. There is no crime in material nature, properly speaking, there is no evil; it is guilty of no resistance to conscience and reason, no resistance to God. The storm in its ravages, the ocean in its fury, the volcano, the earthquake, the thunder bursting in terrific peals, like a preternatural artillery, the lightning in its sudden flash, its extended blaze, its forked darts, or its gleaming tortuous stream, these and all such phenomena are no evils in themselves, not even irregularities, but exact manifestations of law and order, glorious, magnificent revelations of power, of wisdom, and of all-embracing harmony. Had animal existence been added to mere matter, even then sin had been impossible, but not suffering. In the incalculable ages prior to man's creation, which geology reveals, the same state of things which we now witness among the irrational tribes was verified; a vast and successive destruction of animal life took place. Living creatures then preyed on one another, and were formed with the necessary organs and instincts for this purpose. Pain and death were

then realised facts, on an immensely extended scale, and through vast periods of time. It would be vain to assert that this creates no difficulty, when viewed in connection with the goodness of the Creator. But when one thinks of animal life as altogether dissociated from responsibility and futurity, as a short duration, and, while it lasts, almost unmingled enjoyment, when, besides, one thinks of the absolute necessity of a termination to animal existence by one means or other, and of the usually brief pain of death to animals, much like the decay, dissolution, and death of vegetables, the difficulty vanishes away, and requires no elaborate solution. We return to the position, that, with a universe peopled only by irrational animals, moral evil had been impossible. The earth might have presented its scenes of sublimity, grandeur, and beauty; land, sea, and sky might have been filled with manifold creatures, of exquisite structure and form, and capable of every variety of animal enjoyment; planets, suns, stars, and systems might have revolved in harmonious order, and adorned and enriched the mighty concave. Wherefore, then, was a universe created in which it was possible for moral evil, with all its train of physical evils, to arise?

We must ask in return, would not a creation merely material, or even animal, have been a continual reflection on the wisdom of the Creator? Manifestations of mere power, mere beauty, and mere harmony had ever suggested the question, which they could not have answered, "For what purpose?" "To what end?" Themselves unconscious and unintelligent, they must have ever required some addition, in order to complete and to elevate their significance, and destitute of this they

must have ever seemed an empty parade, a purposeless ostentation. Like an unfinished sentence, they must ever have dishonoured him who, having spoken so much, had yet not spoken more. We must add that creation, in this case, had been an unmitigated selfishness. To enjoy the display of His own productive power, to look upon a not exalted reflection of Himself, in not the highest aspects of His Nature, to gratify Himself with the vision from without, and in merely material and sentient forms of that, which, in an infinitely higher sense, abode within, only for this The Great Being must have put forth his creative energy. So far as mind, affection, susceptibility are concerned, immensity had still been a solitude. One eye alone there had been to take in the sense of beauty and grandeur, one heart alone to experience whatever delight was capable of being originated from this source, the eye, the heart of the Creator Himself, and for Him and Him only, as a merely personal gratification, the creation had existed. The personal gratification, also, such as it was, must have been inferior and unworthy. Void of reciprocity, of recognition, of intelligent appreciation, of thankfulness, and of love; all thought and all feeling had been on the side of the Creator, and this, too, without the possibility of the faintest expression of His infinite goodness. Life, indeed, which we have supposed in the creation, is itself a thing of joy, and in the happy lives of myriads of irrational creatures there had been some token of God's good-will. But in so brief an existence as theirs, one too so aimless, had there been no other, how poor, how unworthy of infinite benevolence had not the token been.

It seems to appeal to every principle of reason, to every idea of fitness, and to every conception we are able to form of verisimilitude, that creation, whatever else it might be, must be intelligent and moral. If on grounds, wholly or partially incomprehensible by us, creation was necessary, this at least is plain, that, whatever necessity existed, existed for an intelligent, a moral creation. If again, as to our modes of conception, it reverently seems that the overflowing, irrepressible, infinite lovingness of the Divine Nature fulfilled any part in necessitating creation, nothing can be more manifest than that this demanded intelligence and reciprocative affection. There must be beings, intimately allied and attached to the Great Being, who should not only understand and know and search after their Creator, and recognise Him in the manifestations He should give of Himself, but who should be in close union with Him, should love Him, and be drawn towards Him by the bond of a relationship, as intimate as could exist between the Infinite and the finite. The awful and overwhelming idea of Paternity,* in which there is so much that is impenetrable, with only here and there a gleam flashing through the darkness, rises to the mind, the Paternity of God and the childship of all souls. The Almighty Parent sent forth created likenesses of Himself, beings rational and moral, bearing thus His image, capable of knowing and loving Him, and, in consequence of their relation, under the most solemn responsibility to Him, besides being by their constitution, within the sphere of the eternal and immutable laws of moral life.

* "The Christ of History," pp. 131—140.

Let it be added that an intelligent moral being, without inward freedom and power to choose for himself, is not an anomaly, it is a pure contradiction. To such a being, we may contract the sphere of his outward agency within the narrowest possible limits, without affecting his essential constitution. He may be bound, hand and foot, unable to move a limb, to take a step. But within, as perfectly as if all this were reversed, he forms his own idea of everything, has his own convictions of right and wrong, and is as conscious as ever of choices, preferences, decisions, unknown to every other creature, and absolutely beyond the reach of any and all foreign control. It is impossible to conceive of intelligence and conscience, separated from this perfect voluntariness, this uncontrolled power of choosing. And even if this were not the case what worth could the Infinite One attach to recognition, affection, and moral principles, which were not spontaneous, but compulsory or mechanical? Intelligent appreciation, spontaneous gratitude, genuine unconstrained love, alone are of the slightest moral value. Anything else is mockery, a degradation alike to the receiver and the offerer.

IV. An intelligent, moral, voluntary, and responsible universe was alone possible, according to all human modes of judging.

But such a universe, it has been shown, was incapable of being so guarded as to render the entrance of moral evil impossible. The mysterious power of free choice in a created soul is incapable, in its very nature, of being necessitated even by God. The Almighty could destroy, as he created it, but even He could not force a choice, could

not necessitate that which has no meaning and is nothing, if it be not perfectly free.

Omnipotence, physical power of whatever kind, finite or infinite, has no relation to the action of the will. In his Almightiness, God could in a moment quench the light of reason and of conscience, could extinguish the will, could annihilate the being, but his power over the will, as an active principle, cannot be physical, but must be purely moral, and can be exerted only through the reason, the conscience, and the affections. The utmost power which can be exerted through these channels must belong to God; but the very utmost power of this kind, cannot necessitate a choice. The thing is a contradiction.

On the grounds elsewhere set forth,* it is certain that a voluntary, a responsible being cannot be compelled or be unconsciously passive, in the act of willing. Such a being may be divested of all his inward powers, and of this power of will with the others, may be divested even of his existence; but the power, the liberty of choosing remaining to him, he chooses—that means, he is not necessitated, and is not passive, but consciously active. Considerations addressed to his understanding, his conscience, his affections, his appetites and passions; motives (as we speak) of every kind, and in every sort of combination, may be brought to bear on him; but if the power of choosing remain, it means that he himself, independently of every other being, shall prefer some one out of all the courses offered to him. What he ought to choose, on every ground of interest, wisdom, and duty, is one

* See pp. 100, 137.

question; what he in fact does choose, is quite another question; and this rests ultimately with himself, with himself alone.

Such is the essential nature of will; it is not a mere instrument, acting as it is acted upon, or unconsciously yielding to force, it is itself a beginner, a true causer of action. Whatever is merely acted upon and necessarily obeys the action of something else on it, is not will; it is an instrument, not an actor.

Nor is there here the slightest possible limitation of the Divine Almightiness. No thinking person imagines, that it is in any way derogatory to the Most High that he cannot effect impossibilities—cannot make a square a triangle, or a triangle a square. These things do not belong to the sphere of physical power. All that is within its sphere, all that is possible to it, physical power can effect: it is no limitation of it, that it cannot effect that which is not possible, that to which it has no relation and on which it cannot be brought to bear. The eye is not weak because it does not hear; the ear is not weak because it does not taste. The necessitation of the will is an impossibility, a contradiction, in the very nature of the thing; will is destroyed, it no longer exists, if it be necessitated. No limitation, therefore, of the power of God is in the least involved when we say that even He cannot necessitate the will; it is He Himself who has so constituted it that it does not admit of being necessitated.

It is possible for a responsible creature, in the sense which has been explained, to resist his Maker. Independently of reasoning altogether, the facts of the moral universe bear out this position. Man does, constantly,

disobey, resist, violate, trample on the will of his Maker. The robber, the murderer, the liar, may be taken as notorious examples. When one treacherously, furiously, cruelly imbrues his hands in another's life-blood, the created will is in direct, and at the moment successful, resistance to the Uncreated will. Every act of injustice, of falsehood, of impurity, of cruelty, of treachery, which is perpetrated in the world, is mere and direct resistance to the Divine will, resistance to what the Holy One approves, loves, desires, and expressly commands. If this were in any sense, to any extent, not the case, if the Divine Moral Nature were not truly and wholly opposed to any criminal act, either that act would cease to be criminal, or God would cease to be God. All in the universe, which we distinguish as moral evil, has this essential characteristic, that it is mere, direct, and for the time, successful resistance to the Infinite will.

It is impossible that this essential characteristic can have been wanting or less deeply marked, when, for the first time, sin was introduced into the universe. Whensoever that moment was, whatever was the particular act, howsoever it came about, when we say that sin was committed, we can mean only this, that an act of the created will was accomplished, in direct opposition to the Divine will, in opposition to eternal rectitude, purity, truth, and love. At that moment, a created being, introduced into the universe a thing which the Creator abhorred. The constitution of the being was such that it was possible for him to do this, and he did it; and moral evil, that is, the voluntary abuse of moral power, for the first time, became a monstrous fact in the universe. The Almighty

could, in an instant, have crushed the power which he had conferred, in an instant have destroyed the guilty being; but moral power continuing (in other words, intelligent, moral, voluntary beings existing), He could not, from the very necessity of its nature, have prevented its abuse.

There is something unutterably revolting, in the only other possible supposition on this subject, which we scarcely dare to clothe in words. It amounts to this, that at the moment when crime was introduced into the universe, the Great Being could have prevented it, and He purposely did not prevent it. We make bold to pronounce this, without any hesitation or qualification, a direct impeachment of the Divine Goodness, and of the entire Moral Character of the Infinite One. That which I can, but do not prevent, if it lie within my sphere, is as really attributable to me as if it were my positive, personal act. I may as truly be the cause of an effect, by not doing what I could have done to prevent it, as by actually producing it.

Is it insinuated, that although the Great Being might and could have prevented the entrance of evil, he was under no obligation to exert his power for this end, but in perfect rectitude suffered evil to be introduced? Reverently, must that word obligation be connected with the Supreme, by creatures, all whose views are so imperfect and so short-sighted as ours. But, with profound reverence we dare ask, had the minds He formed, had His own offspring, no claim to protection from their Almighty Father? Had the transcendent interests of eternal rectitude and truth no claim on the Holy One?

Could He suffer these interests to be endangered, to be even permanently injured, while by the exercise of His power they might have been saved? It is morally impossible! Whatever conjecture on this awful subject we may hazard, this, at least, is to be abhorred. Before this can be admitted by any mind, it must be completely forgotten, that sin, in itself, is an unmitigated curse. There is no *quid pro quo* in this case, nothing to compensate or even to counterbalance it. It is mere, sheer abomination.

Moral evil means the pollution and the misery, at least for the time, of the moral universe. In itself it is essentially and only misery, and can produce nothing but misery. The effects may be modified, may even be turned to the aid of good in other directions. But in itself it is only misery, and all that it natively produces is only misery. Nor let us forget, besides, that moral evil, *i.e.*, injustice, impurity, falsehood, or whatever other name it may take, is the thing which the Holy One necessarily abhors; not which He professes to abhor, which He is said to abhor, but which He really, and only, and infinitely abhors. And did He, for any cause, on any ground, suffer, when he could have hindered, that to enter, to which reason, rectitude, truth, and love in His nature are eternally opposed? If he only suffered the entrance of crime, while He could have and might have prevented it, then is He really, though indirectly, its author, and not this only, but all the moral and physical evil of which that first crime was the inlet and the fountain, must be referred back to Him. The entrance of sin, that is, the abuse of moral power, the rebellion of the created will, must have been inpreventable, else it

must have been prevented. All that was possible must have been done; but to prevent the abuse of moral power by a finite creature, that is, to necessitate the created will,* was an impossibility.

V. At this stage we confront a matter of fact altogether indisputable. The Great Being foresaw the inevitable introduction of evil into the universe, and with this distinct foresight He put forth his creative power. Let it not be overlooked that there is a wide distinction between foresight or foreknowledge and predetermination. A predetermination is the antecedent of an event. A foreknowledge is only a logical consequent of it. Predetermination creates, causes the event. Foreknowledge is logically created, caused by the event. An event is certain, just because it is predetermined. It can be foreknown, only because it is certain. The foreknowledge has nothing to do with the production of the event, in any possible sense. In the very nature of the thing, the event must first be seen to be certain on its own grounds; and only as thus otherwise certain, can it be foreknown. It is not the foreknowledge of God, therefore, which makes human actions certain, but it is their certainty, on totally other grounds, which makes His foreknowledge even possible.

But it abides true that The Great Being, from eternity, foresaw the introduction of sin! Here is the dark centre of the mystery of evil, and here it is, that the problem of creation seems to defy solution. Granted that sin is only and wholly the act of the created will, and only and wholly

* "Die Christliche Lehre von der Sünde." Jul. Müller, D.D. 2te Band, ss. 140—237. Breslau, 1858.

in opposition to the Supreme will. So far, there is a measure of light. But it abides true, that God foresaw the entrance of sin, and yet He gave being to the universe! This is the mystery, and this, mystery or no mystery, is a simple matter of fact, undenied and undeniable by all who believe in the Divine existence and have any consistent conception of the Divine attributes. The fact bears with no peculiar force on the views here expressed or on any one view of moral providence that may be taken, but with equal force, on all. Unless we can imagine, that moral evil took the Omniscient by surprise, was an emergency unanticipated by Him and for which He was not prepared, and this is so revolting, so blasphemous, that only the insanity of impiety could entertain it; unless we could imagine this, it is impossible to deny, that the absolute certainty of moral evil (and of physical evil, its necessary consequent), must have been before the eye of God when he put forth his creative energy.

But foreknowledge is not predetermination. A Divine predetermination, or even a simple Divine volition of sin, supposing it not, in itself, inpreventable, had been the true and proper cause of sin, whensoever it became an actual fact in the universe. The Great Being even in this case might not Himself by His own direct agency have produced evil, but, having decreed its existence, He had caused that exist it must at the appointed time. Nor only this, for in determining the end, it is necessarily involved, that he had also determined the means by which it should be effected. In other words, he must have so pre-arranged and planned the course of pro-

vidence that moral evil was certain to arise, and that all that mass of moral and physical evils, which have desolated and polluted creation, should come into being. Some of the wisest and best of men have deliberately subscribed to this blasphemy. "If by the author of sin," says President Edwards, "be meant the permitter or not hinderer of sin, and at the same time, the disposer of a state of events in such a manner, for wise, holy, and most excellent ends and purposes, that sin (if it be permitted or not hindered) will most certainly and infallibly follow; I say, if this be all that is meant by being the author of sin, I do not deny that God is the author of sin (though I dislike and reject the phrase, as that which by use and custom is apt to carry another sense); it is no reproach for the Most High to be thus the author of sin." *

Limit in conception, if that must be, the power and the physical resources of the Great Being, but, by all that is venerable and all that is terrible, let us not dare to touch His purity, His sincerity, His goodness, His moral character. Anything rather than this! downright fatalism rather than this! for this has all the inherent enormity of fatalism, with a dash of disingenuousness and meanness, which renders it detestable. That on the one hand God should infinitely abhor crime, and that on the other hand crime should nevertheless arise in His universe, that a created will, as such, should be uncompellable, even by the Supreme; that man should be capable of effectually resisting his Maker, and of causing that to which his Maker is unalterably opposed, is a profound, an inscrutable mystery. But that God should be the direct

* "Enquiry into the Freedom of the Will," Part IV., sec. 9.

author and causer of sin is no mystery, but a naked blasphemy. Moral evil cannot be explained; if it could, it would cease to be what it is. It is altogether an anomaly in the universe.* There is no law into which it can be resolved, for it is a violation of all law. It can be accounted for on no principle, for it is in the face of every right principle. An interpretation of it—a rational, intelligible interpretation of it—is necessarily impossible, for it is a violent outrage to conscience, reason, gratitude, and love. The fact of sin is certain, but its deep ground and its full interpretation lie beyond discovery.*

This much we know, the Great God created natures like to his own, the offspring of a Divine Parentage, endowed them with the highest capacities, and acted upon them by the mightiest influences, but thereafter left it to them, as voluntary beings, to determine their course. Impenetrable darkness hangs over the issue: the sons of God revolted from their Almighty Father, abused their moral power, and chose evil. Without consent or sufferance of His, in opposition to His nature, His will, and His express command, in pure opposition to Him, they chose evil. He did not passively suffer it to be so, when He could and might have prevented it; above all, there was no antecedent plan of His in which it was a chosen part which might have been left out. On the contrary, the abuse of moral power by creatures, in the sight of the Creator was evil, only evil, and the fountain of immense and inconceivable evil which, had it been preventable, must have been prevented. He did not wink at it as an indirect, ultimate good, far less take advantage of it in

* See pp. 224-5.

order to carry forward His own purposes; He only hated it; in every view, on every ground, He could only and infinitely hate it. In mere, direct resistance to Him, from the perversion of the human will, moral evil arose. The first sin, like all sin, wheresoever, whensoever, howsoever happening, was infinitely abhorred by Him. All His love to His own offspring, and all His love to eternal and immutable right and truth, render it certain that every possible means for its prevention must have been put forth. He can be connected with nothing but good, unmixed, highest good; all that He does must be perfectly, purely good, and if evil arise, it can be from no defect in His workmanship, which by any possibility could have been remedied. He can give only a destiny of good, and that which he forms must in every part be fitted only to secure a destiny of good, without the omission of any possible thing by which that destiny could be affected. Evil, therefore, whether as foreseen or as seen by the Almighty, can have been foreseen and seen only to be hated, to be resisted by all possible means, to be put down.

The eternal fact did not become a falsehood in time. From eternity God's relation to crime, as a conception and a possibility, was summed up in one word, abhorrence. When it became a reality, His entire relation to it, not less but almost more than before, must have been summed up in one word, abhorrence. At all hazards, and in spite of all that may seem to be at variance with them, the infinite purity, the transparent, perfect sincerity, and the overflowing lovingness of the Uncreated One must be upheld, for they are fundamental and paramount. What-

ever be doubtful, nothing must be admitted for a moment which, even by implication in the remotest possible degree, reflects upon them. We are prepared to hold almost any and everything else uncertain, prepared to surrender almost any and everything else, but these, in all their integrity, must be preserved without suspicion and without taint.

All good from God, and nothing but good from God! All evil only and wholly and always from the creature! Whatever be dark, we must maintain that this is light, and sheds its illumination on the course of Divine providence. That providence in relation to sin can have had no end but one, the introduction of all possible instrumentalities and influences calculated to prevent it, to diminish its amount, and to retrieve in the highest possible degree its effects.

The diffusive, overflowing, irrepressible lovingness of God, ever in harmony with infinite rectitude, wisdom, and truth, the intense, unquenchable, eternal desire of the Divine Mind to produce blessedness, which found vent for itself in creation, has now its appropriate organ in Almighty Providence—an organ for bringing forth the largest possible amount of good, and for filling the universe with pure and permanent glory.

SECTION V.

PHYSICAL, THE EFFECT, BUT ALSO THE CORRECTIVE, OF MORAL EVIL.

SIN ITS OWN PUNISHMENT.—NECESSARILY PHYSICAL.—AFFECTING SUSCEPTIBILITIES, STRUCTURE, BEING OF SOUL.—PHYSICAL EVILS STRICTLY SO CALLED.—I. CONNECTION, MIND AND BODY.—ANIMAL STRUCTURE.—PAIN, &C., &C., &C.—II. HEREDITARY, REPRESENTATIONARY CONSTITUTION OF HUMAN RACE.—EXTENSION, PROPAGATION OF SUFFERING.—FORMS, DEGREES, DISTRIBUTION OF PHYSICAL EVIL, OF GOD.—THEIR END, HIGHEST MORAL GOOD.—SUFFERING, INSTRUMENT WHEREWITH TO EXTIRPATE SIN.

SIN AND PUNISHMENT.

MORAL evil is its own punishment; apart from the agency of the Great Being altogether, it inevitably punishes itself. A falsehood, an injustice, a cruelty, a revenge always at the first creates pain, more or less, in the transgressor; it is contrary to our God-given nature, and only when it has succeeded, and so far as it has succeeded, in deadening and depraving the susceptibilities, does it cease to be, in some intelligible sort, pain, suffering, physical evil. A bad passion (the word is significant), jealousy, revenge, anger, lust, is a sensation, not less than an emotion, and consciously a painful sensation in the mind, whatever pleasure it may at the same time create. Moral evil literally hurts, gives pain to the soul; it goes right against the judgment, and still more against the conscience and the heart, and is an offence and an injury to these powers. And this, moreover, lies in the very nature of moral being, and could not have been otherwise. To revolt against right thinking and right feeling is in itself, and owing to the essential constitution of an intelligent, responsible agent, an offence, and a hurt to his mind. Above all, it hurts the conscience, the most susceptible and tender part of the

spiritual nature and the part which sin most directly assails. Conscience is the power to which it belongs to accuse, convict, and condemn self; and he who has offended against this power suffers in proportion to the amount of his offence, were there none but himself to observe and to judge. He disapproves, despises, abhors himself; and self-condemnation, self-contempt, self-abhorrence, are the reallest suffering. But connected with and added to this purely self-punishment there is the thought, that another eye besides ours looks upon our sin, and another authority condemns it besides that within the breast, an authority whose verdict is impartial and unerring. And here again, pain, suffering, that is physical evil, is inevitably connected with moral evil.

A mind conscious of sin, especially in the beginning of a course of evil, is always a prey to fear—well or ill founded is not here the question. But let it be marked that this fear is not injected from without, but is created altogether by reflections and apprehensions from within, and arises from the very constitution of moral being. Remorse and dread of condemnation constitute a kind of suffering which is inevitably consequent on wrong-doing, and is more or less severe, according to the character of the sin. The perpetrator of great conscious crime is the prey of remorse almost insupportable. The thought is torturing, that for what he suffers and has caused others to suffer, he is alone to blame, and that he might have, could have, ought to have obeyed conscience and reason, but would not and did not.

But moral evil creates suffering not only because it strikes against our convictions, and our emotions, and because it

excites fear and remorse: it deeply injures the very structure of the soul, and involves a real derangement of the moral constitution. The law of that constitution, as essential and universal within its sphere as the law of gravitation is in the material universe, has been overthrown by it for the time; the moving power of the soul has been seduced by it to act falsely; and the will has revolted from its ordained, constitutional guides, rectitude, truth, and love. Moral life is entirely grounded in these principles, and entirely dependent upon them. In order to its very being, as a constituted existence, it must be in harmony with them; and in departing from them, the soul necessarily, to the extent of the departure, loses being, and injures that which constitutes its very essence.*

But this, be it well marked, lies in the very nature of moral being. The slightest departure from the eternal laws of that being inevitably and necessarily affects moral life. Sin in itself is necessarily death, death begun, and unless eradicated, can have no end but perdition. Disease, affecting a vital part of the body, is in itself death begun; unless counteracted, it necessarily extends, and must lead to total death. It may be counteracted; but in itself it is a dying, a begun derangement and dissolution of the animal fabric. Moral evil, by a yet more awful internal necessity, is destructive. In itself it is perdition,—perdition begun. There is no moral pathology by the aid of which we can trace and expose the spread of evil within; but the fact that it spreads is sufficiently, terribly apparent. No disease is so inveterate, so difficult of cure,

* See p. 141.

so all but hopelessly ineradicable, as that which attacks the spiritual nature. The first choice of evil instantly affects the entire inward vision, and pollutes and poisons all the fountains of thought and of emotion. In the case of some particular forms of criminal indulgence it is very soon seen how essentially not only moral but even mental power and mental life are thereby impaired. Shocking examples are not wanting, in which the intellect is seen to be permanently injured, while the moral perceptions are hopelessly obscured, and the light of reason and conscience is all but quenched; in which the mind, the soul, becomes almost impassive, and the beings are all but reduced to the level of the brute creation. Significantly, we call them moral wrecks, lost and hopeless. But all this is in no respect owing to an actual agency of Heaven, producing what could not otherwise have come to pass: it is only the inevitable nature of moral being, the necessary working out of moral evil itself; and all that the Most High does in connection with it is to resist, and to put down, in consistency with the free agency of his creatures, that which He abhors. Moral evil, with all its tremendous consequences, is the one thing, with which the Almighty is for ever contending, and which it is the design of every department, and of the entire plan of His providence, to exterminate.

We conclude that physical evil, that is suffering, pain, is the inevitable effect of moral evil, which even God could not have prevented, a result altogether consistent with His will, but lying in the essential nature of free, finite being. But the physical evil, of which we have spoken, terminates on the mind without essentially

affecting the body, and the actual constitution and circumstances of humanity have as yet been overlooked. We are compound beings, and the seat of that which is usually understood by physical evil, is the body. Some of the forms, in which bodily suffering comes forth, as the effect of moral wrong, are exceedingly striking. In consequence of the mysterious connection between soul and body, mental emotions, whether joyous or afflictive, virtuous or vicious, exert an acknowledged, a universally understood influence on the animal system. Anger, revenge, jealousy, envy, are not only in themselves and as passions, painful, but they create bodily disorder and suffering. Even physical death is often the sudden result of the violence of these emotions. In less extreme cases, they affect the functions of the brain, the heart, and the liver, interfere with the circulations and secretions of the body, and produce disease, temporary or permanent. There are certain sins, which very visibly and necessarily affect the animal health, impair the constitution, derange and pollute the whole system, lead to decrepitude, premature old age, and early death, and transmit their physical effects for many succeeding generations. And this exhibits a fact, altogether new in this connection, and as striking as it is new.

The extension of physical evil beyond the moral delinquent himself, is one of the marked features of providence on our earth, and one, whose verifications are all but universal. The murderer inflicts the greatest of physical evils on a fellow-creature, perhaps on many of his fellow-creatures, and in addition to their death, he wounds the hearts of those who are related to them, and

injures, perhaps ruins, the worldly prospects of many families. The lust of money has involved millions in all the horrors of slavery, and millions more, related to the first, in hopeless grief, in poverty, and wretchedness. The passions of ambition, anger, and pride plunge nations into all the crimes and sufferings of war. The amount of physical evil caused by this tremendous scourge it is not possible to calculate, or even conceive. The myriads brought to an untimely grave, and the privations, disappointments, and lifelong griefs of myriads more, proclaim a reckoning never to be told. But war cannot be alone. Battle-fields are the sources of pestilence and plague. They pollute the surrounding atmosphere, and disease and death, perhaps numbering far more victims than the sword, are spread far and near. There wants only one grim addition to constitute a monstrous trio. War, Pestilence, and Famine are never far separated. An unnatural demand for the necessaries of life is created, their price is enhanced, at the same time that over great extents of country agriculture has been necessarily neglected, or perhaps its produce wickedly destroyed. The sufferings of the masses become accumulated, and want, with a fearful increase of disease, stalks through the devoted land.

Such aspects of human affairs, and they might be unlimitedly extended, are inexpressibly appalling, but it can hardly fail to strike the least reflecting that on the face of them they exhibit the agency of man, quite as much as the agency of The Most High. Physical evil, in all the hideous forms that have been described, comes forth manifestly out of the evil passions of man's heart;

and these the Great Being only forbids, condemns, and abhors. So far as appears, the evil will of men, through the fixed laws of the natural world, only produces its necessary effects. The immense proportion of all the sufferings that afflict the world are visibly the work of men themselves, the consequence, directly or indirectly, of their follies, or their crimes, or both. Even the extension of suffering beyond the individual evil-doer, so far as seems, and so far as direct agency is concerned, is attributable to men. They, and only they, directly bring it about that the innocent are involved in suffering which the guilty alone deserve. Parents are the agents in those sins which yet descend in their effects on their faultless children; and children, again, by their direct agency involve parents in their suffering. In the same social relations, in the same civil sphere, in the same locality, individuals of the most opposite character are overtaken by a calamity of which only one was the cause. There are thus wide disorder and confusion in the existing condition of the world, a complete blending of evil with good, an almost indiscriminate diffusion of evil on all sides, irrespective of individual character and desert; but the direct agency, at least in great part, by which this is brought about is man's, rather than God's. It is man we must charge, if the state of things be such that no judgment can be formed of character from outward position in this world,—if the truly good be often poor, unknown, or heavily afflicted, while those of an opposite character are outwardly prosperous, and if, while some are outwardly prosperous, others, not more undeserving,

and in consequence of circumstances over which they have no control, and which were, perhaps, originated prior to their existence, be subject to lifelong privations and sufferings, to wretchedness and want.

But it would be only trifling with a most serious subject of human thought to attempt to deny that there is a positive, and a constant Divine agency in the evolution of the physical evils of the world. In two directions, chiefly, this is manifest: First, in the structure of the human being; Secondly, in that general constitution under which men, as a distinct order of creatures, are placed.

I. It is altogether owing to the Supreme Will and ordination, that man is material as well as spiritual, and that his material nature is such as it is.

That in his composite being, in the fact and the character of his material organisation, and in its connection with his spiritual nature, a large proportion of the sufferings which he endures find their origin, is undeniable. But who ordained, that evil in the soul should affect the animal health and life? In the nature of the thing itself, there is no reason why a mental condition should produce any change in the condition of the body. It is indeed a mystery that it should, a mystery inexplicable. Not less mysterious is it that men, through the affections of their minds, should not only injure their own bodies, and be so constituted that they must thus injure their own bodies, but that they should also be able to inflict physical sufferings on others.

It is perfectly conceivable, that the passions of the

mind might not have reached in their influence beyond it, even in the being himself, and that none of the animal functions might have suffered the slightest disturbance. On the other hand, it is perfectly conceivable that beings of a compound nature like men, though capable of morally affecting one another, might have had no organs, and no instincts, and no means of physically injuring each other. That the fact is otherwise, can be traced only and wholly to the ordination of the Creator. It is His arrangement, His plan with His creatures.

Whilst, then, an immense proportion of the sufferings of our world can be traced to the direct agency of man himself, it is at the same time not to be concealed that he is capable of this sort of agency, in consequence of the peculiar structure of his compound being, and of this the Almighty is the sole author. All the outward forms in which physical (in the sense of material) evil comes forth, are possible, entirely in consequence of this structure. The frame of the body is a Divine ordination, and the various kinds of pain and evil which reach it, depend upon its frame. All the laws of the animal system and the range of its agency, whether as it respects itself or as it respects other beings, are of Divine appointment. The materials and the mode of its sustenance, its exposure also to manifold evils, that it should be open on so many sides to the assault of disease, that it should be capable of dissolution, and that it should certainly die after a limited period, all are simply owing to the will and power of God. The privations, the sufferings, the wants, and the deaths of human beings, visibly and directly resulting, perhaps, from their

own or others' follies or crimes, are yet traceable in the last instance to the Almighty, because they arise out of that material organisation and that connection between the material and the spiritual, which men did not frame for themselves, but which He has established. The last of physical evils, death, and all the countless pains and miseries by which it may be preceded, have their foundation, virtually, in Divine appointment.

II. It is altogether owing to the Supreme will and ordination that the human race is constituted on what may be called the successional principle, and that the system of our world is an hereditary or representational system.

Men descend from one another, in successive generations, and by the very law of their being are mutually and largely dependent. They are first receivers and then conveyers of life and of influences, whether good or evil. Each individual depends inevitably, to a large extent as it respects the good of this world, and as it respects even moral influences, on his predecessor, his progenitor. Each generation, in like manner, is thus largely and inevitably dependent on that which preceded it. The influence of each individual and of each generation tells for good or for evil, not only upon his or its immediate successor, but upon all the individuals and generations succeeding, to the end of time. This is plain matter of fact, interpret it how we will, or leave it uninterpreted. It is no mere theory of theologians, but a solid fact; which none can deny, whatever view of moral providence they may adopt. By the very constitution of things, the

closest association among men and the largest mutual (even moral) dependence are rendered inevitable.

This is the doing of the Creator, wholly and only the doing of the Creator. Without consulting with His creatures, without their consent or even knowledge, before their existence, He ordained this hereditary or representational system; and coming into the world, they come, will they or will they not, under this irrevocable law. The human race might have been created at once, and not in successive generations. A system of perfect individualism, instead of one of associated dependence, might have been established. Necessarily, and under any conceivable circumstances, they must have been capable of morally influencing one another, and must have been subject to each other's influence. But there might have been no such inevitable and involuntary dependence as now exists. That, owing to the original constitution of the world, the moral and eternal destiny of a single human being is necessitated, in other words, that a single human being, not through that evil which is wholly and only his own, but solely in consequence of this divine constitution, is inevitably ruined, we may lawfully deny.* To prove such a position is perfectly impossible, and to maintain it is a gratuitous impeachment of the Merciful Father. As our race is at present constituted, and although external circumstances and even moral influences, to a large extent, are independent of our volition, we can nevertheless believe that there is ample foundation for entire, individual responsibility. The Holy and Merciful Spirit of God is near to every

* See pp. 132—7.

human being. Whosoever chooses the true and the right, has yielded thus far, to the heavenly influence ; and whoever sins, knows and feels that he was not compelled to sin, that he could have, and might have, and ought to have acted differently. This and this only creates and constitutes his responsibility.

It would be vain, with our limited faculties and sphere of judging, to balance the opposite systems indicated by the words individual and hereditary, and to decide which is the more just, or the more favourable to created beings. But it is not difficult to perceive very manifest and vast advantages arising from the intimate relations and dependences of the human race, which could not otherwise have been secured. A large class of affections, otherwise unknown, is hereby originated, affections that form the purest joy and the sweetest solace of life, and which exert the mightiest influence on the moral principles and character. Lessons also which could never have been heard, exhibitions of the effect of moral evil which could never have been witnessed, and warnings, and considerations, and motives without number, which could never otherwise have reached us, are brought to bear on human minds. If, on the one hand, there be a fearful amount of evil influence acting on successive generations arising from the words, the writings, the acts, the character, and the entire example of individuals, there is also, on the other hand, an incalculable amount of influence for good, which the world had wanted.

It is no irrational depth of humility, in beings such as we are, to be persuaded, that a constitution, which is certainly of Divine appointment, is not less just, and even

more favourable to the interests of creatures and to the triumph of virtue, than any other which could possibly have been established. Little able as we are to grasp its entire effectsd an their numberless ramifications, and with so much that is advantageous arising from it which even we are able to perceive, it is no extravagant demand on our faith in the Infinite Being, to be called upon to trust that a greater amount of good, on the whole, shall hereby be secured, than could have been secured by any other possible means.

Looking to the hereditary constitution of the world, on the one hand, and on the other hand, to the material organisation of human beings and to the connection between soul and body, and reflecting that the actual material sufferings of men have their origin entirely in these two sources, we perceive distinctly that without exception, all the existing forms of physical evil on earth are directly traceable to the Almighty.

Essentially considered, physical evil, suffering, is no arrangement, no purpose of His. That it should result from moral evil is simply inevitable in the nature of things. It is perfectly consistent with His will, but it is the necessary effect of sin. But what is thus true of suffering, essentially considered, is distinctly not true of the forms in which suffering comes forth. The Almighty undeniably and directly has to do with them. Moral evil is altogether and only abomination to Him. He cannot approach it, cannot permit it, in any sense, cannot even recognise its existence, except in for ever resisting and repelling it. But physical evil belongs to a totally different category. In itself simply, it also can be only

abhorrent to the merciful nature of the Supreme; but it is not, like moral evil, in all aspects and on all grounds, opposed and only opposed to the Divine will. On the contrary, as the necessary, retributive effect of the deeper curse, it is wholly consistent with the nature of things; and the rectitude, the wisdom, and all the attributes of the Great Being accord with it and pronounce it fitting, as it is inevitable. Since then moral evil must inevitably lead to physical evil, and since therefore physical evil must exist in one form or other, God in His mercy and His wisdom, has been pleased to make use of suffering with a view even to diminish its amount, and above all for the purpose of putting down by means of it the earlier and more ruthless foe of creation. In entire consistency with His nature, He can take hold of physical evil: even His purity, His wisdom, His very love and mercy, demand that He should take hold of it, and that He should directly wield it as an instrument for effecting a grand and godlike purpose, a purpose which is the one, all-embracing aim of His moral providence,—the entire extirpation of sin.

The crimes of men are their own; their Creator has no part in them, their origin, their forms, their times, or any of their modifications, no relation to them except as an antagonist. He never ordained them, and never so arranged it, that they should be perpetrated, but only and always forbade them, and unutterably hated them. From first to last, He has been doing one thing, and only one thing, in reference to moral evil—putting it down; this is the foundation of His earthly providence, the principle on which it is entirely based. But the Almighty has a real

and direct relation to physical evil; it is a necessity, which even God could not prevent, and which springs out of the very nature of moral evil; and so far it also is His abhorrence. But with the forms which physical evil assumes God has directly to do. They belong to that hereditary constitution under which the human race, by His ordination, is placed, and to that material organisation which He hath planned and constructed, and that intimate relation between soul and body which He hath established. Out of these Divine ordinations issue, directly or indirectly, all the gigantic calamities of the world, and all the commoner but incalculable evils, the pains, the griefs, the diseases, the deaths of our race, and all the revolting inequalities and confusions in the outward condition of human beings. It is quite true, that in very great part the results which we witness may be owing to the sufferers themselves; and that in still greater part, they may be traced to the ignorance, the selfishness, the avarice, the cruelty, the folly, the pride, the lust, of their fellow-men. But the positive agency of God nevertheless is undeniable.

And is this the result, we ask, of the government of a mighty, a wise, a holy, and a good Being? It is: with calm and perfect trust, the answer can be returned, It is. And but for this government of a wise and holy and good and mighty Being such phenomena must have been inconceivably more afflictive and terrific. This is certain—if we look with pity, as we do, on the condition of our fellow-creatures, He who made them must regard them with infinite compassion, and wherever He acts, must act only to alleviate suffering, and to diminish its

amount. If, now and again, we can imagine alleviations possible which are not introduced, and evils prevented, which on the contrary are endured, sober reason suggests to us, that it is with the sum of physical evil, as a whole, that the Great God is dealing, and that the changes of which we think, if temporarily and locally good, would ultimately and over all be an increase of misery. It is impossible, having His character, in its essential attributes, before our minds, to doubt that that sum is immeasurably lessened instead of being augmented by His intervention.

The infinitely righteous, wise, holy, and loving Being is extirpating, by the most effectual methods, that which is the source of all evil, the dishonour and the perdition of the universe. Apparent individual anomalies (which however are not really such), examples of intense suffering, of suffering embracing large multitudes and classes of human beings, must affect and afflict us. They are fitted to deepen our impressions of moral evil, which reveals itself thus fearfully even in its physical consequences. So far as these consequences can be traced, either to the sufferers themselves, or to the neglect of attainable preventives and correctives, and of cordial and active sympathy, in those who might have saved, or could have aided the sufferers, there may be, there is cause for the severest reprehension. Let it be administered, without stint, but never and nowhere can there be just cause for reproaching or suspecting the essential character or the merciful providence of the Divine Being. Moral evil on earth is the work of man alone, to which the Creator ever was, is, and ever must be infinitely

opposed. Physical evil in itself is the necessary effect of moral evil, which even God could not have prevented, and His connection even with this consists solely in modifying the forms in which it comes forth, in diminishing its sum total, and in directing it to the production of the highest good.

With all the crimes and all the woes of our race before our eyes, humbled, grieved, and condemned by the spectacle, we can yet look above to the resplendent sunlight of the Infinite Nature, and believe, with absolute confidence, that human sin is inpreventable, else it had been prevented; and for suffering—that not a pang, not a groan, not a tear, not a sigh, has ever had or has place in our world, which could have been spared, on any ground of rectitude, wisdom, or love.

The All-Mighty Father of minds is reigning; amidst the crimes, the confusions, and the sufferings of this world He is pursuing a divine plan; putting down all evil; distributing, modifying, allotting physical evil, in order to extirpate and destroy moral evil; punishing and conquering that wilful abuse of free agency, which is the original and the sole fountain of all that degrades, afflicts, and pollutes creation; restoring the human soul to its rightful guides, conscience and reason, and to those laws in the reign of which alone the spiritual harmony of creation can be maintained, and realising the original divine idea of the universe, as a kingdom of righteousness, purity, truth, and love, and, withal, as a Family and a Home,—"The Eternal One" with "The All" around him, each a glorious and spotless reflection of the Source of Being.

SECTION VI.

MORAL EVIL, INEVITABLE AND REMEDIABLE.

GOD ALONE, INFALLIBLE.—FINITE BEING, NECESSARILY FALLIBLE.—THROUGH EXPERIENCE OF EVIL, REDEEMED FROM IT.—DIVINE INTERPOSITION AND INFLUENCE.—PROBATION, UNIVERSAL AND UNRESTRICTED.—MUST BE SO, IF FREE BEINGS AT ALL.—SIN AND SUFFERING INEVITABLE.—PROBATION AND PURGATION.—FREEDOM AND FORCE.—GOD AND SPIRITUAL INFLUENCE.—REASON AND CONSCIENCE.—EVIL CONCEIVABLE, ONLY IF REMEDIABLE.

MORAL EVIL INEVITABLE BUT REMEDIABLE.

THE foregoing discussions have failed in one of their main purposes, if they have not shown that it was impossible for the Great Being to prevent the entrance of moral and physical evil into a universe of free rational creatures. But this conclusion, in the last instance, and for its deepest basis, rests on the Infinite Purity and the Infinite Love of the Creator. He, who abhors sin infinitely, could never have suffered it to come forth—the loving Father who declares, "all souls are mine," could never have suffered them to be polluted and endangered—if He could, consistently, have prevented this issue. Had there existed any means whatever, compatible with the nature of free, finite beings, of preventing sin, He must have known, and as inevitably must have adopted them. But they did not exist; for had they existed, they must have been employed by the infinitely Holy and the infinitely Loving Father.

It is not hard for imagination to picture the Great Being surrounding every one of His children, at every moment, with pure influences, within and without, so as to preserve them in unswerving obedience. But it is a picture only, a mere fancy-picture, which reflection

quickly dissipates and disowns. The analogy, sometimes suggested, of a human family and of the moral power of parental counsel and love, is feeble and narrow, even so far as it goes, and what is more, it bears rather adversely than favourably on the conclusion which it is meant to sustain. Granted, that if parents be dutiful, and loving, and wise, they will not wholly lose a rich reward, but those are little acquainted with domestic life, who do not know that with all the care and thought and love of parents, they are often cut to the heart by the folly and the vice of one or other of those whom they love. There is in the human nature a radical propensity to wrong, a deep-seated wilfulness and wickedness which proves itself again and again invincible. Think, then, of the countless children of the Great Father scattered over the vast universe, and each not only wilful, and with an inherent tendency to assert his will, but exposed every moment, in ten thousand ways, to influences from within and from without! Is it conceivable, or possible, with any amount, however great, of pure influence from above, that not even one should ever assert himself, be guilty of diverging inwardly from the Supreme Will, and should thus become a centre of divergence and of evil to myriads? The facts of the actual condition of the universe justify the conclusion that this is not conceivable, and not possible. But even if it were, and if by constant Divine watching every created being were preserved in the path of right, this world might then be a harmless, an innocent, and (if the phrase may be forgiven) a *goody* world; but it could never thus be really good and really strong, and really safe in goodness. Virtue untried, virtue always shielded

and aided, could be only puny and sickly, and essentially insecure. It would degrade the Infinite Being to imagine that He could look complacently on responsible creatures who were good only because they were kept good, and were for ever held back by a divine force from contact with evil. A world of such creatures had been a perpetual dishonour to the Most High, unworthy alike of His infinite power, His infinite wisdom, His infinite purity, and His infinite love. Virtue secured by aid from without is not real virtue, is not virtue at all; and with only this, there could have been no safety and no rest to the universe for ever and ever. For let an emergency, easy to be imagined, once arise in any coming age throughout eternity, let a being find himself alone for a moment, and impelled to self-assertion, then a sudden solitary apostasy would break out, and creation would be disorganised. With virtue ever shielded and aided from without, the universe would be every moment and eternally in insecurity and danger. He only is strong and assured who is strong within himself. The purpose of God, revealed in His actual providence, is to make men strong, not by external aids, but in themselves,—strong by actually knowing, experiencing, and conquering evil. Had it been possible, sin had assuredly been for ever prevented. It was not prevented, because in consistency with the perfections of the Most High, and with the nature of His rational creatures, it could not be prevented.

One Being and one alone is necessarily infallible and immutable, and He is so, for a reason which applies to none besides—because He is self-existent and eternal. All finite beings, in their essential nature, are fallible,

and they have all, either as individuals or as orders, actually fallen. Finity means fallibility, and in the Divine foreknowledge, verified by the history of the only orders of rational beings known to us, finity and actual fall are inseparable. The conscious free agency of creatures abides untouched, and rests upon evidence which no reasoning, however plausible, can destroy, or even weaken. They know in themselves, with entire assurance, that if they sin it is only and wholly because they choose to sin, and for no other reason whatever. They are guilty and condemned, themselves being judges. But if it lay in the finity of their nature—a thing which neither they nor their Maker could prevent or alter—that they would sin, it is impossible not to see that this must relate itself profoundly to the Divine thought of evil, and to the Divine aspect towards those who perpetrate evil. At the least, we are constrained to think, that the Great Being foresaw the absolute necessity of first leaving created minds to be revealed and exposed to themselves, first making them understand by actual experience what their nature really was, and first teaching them, in a way never to be forgotten, that their strength lay not in themselves, but in Him—all this, before they could be eternally established and secured in purity and in strength. But this experience, once profoundly reached and thoroughly inwrought into the very texture and substance of the being, their safety would be assured for ever and ever. The alternative before the Supreme was this—either no intelligent responsible creation, or with such a creation the inevitable entrance of sin and suffering. Through this dark and abhorred defile lay the only path to the throne of uni-

versal, holy, and happy being. But it did lie through this defile, and Infinite Lovingness no longer coexisted with eternal isolation.

In view of the fact now stated, and its involved results, good men have sometimes likened creation to a Divine cross. The idea is daring, and borders on impiety. Most minds shrink with horror—instinctively and justly shrink—from connecting the idea of God with disappointment, and sorrow, and pain. The infinite blessedness and calm of the All-Perfect, of Him who sees the end and the beginning in the same instant glance, are incompatible with mental disquiet, and with the agitation and the anguish of grief. No—a thousand times, No ! This is to confound human emotions with eternal states, and to measure the Divine by the standard of human experience. At the same time, to our limited conceptions, and speaking after the manner of men, creation with all its sins and all its sufferings, with all its hostilities, and confusions, and myriad abominations, does suggest the idea of a burden and a cross. Calvary becomes the type of a primitive inscrutable mystery. We wonder no longer that pure self-sacrifice is exalted as the radical and also the loftiest virtue of humanity ; for creation, the first outcome of the Eternal Nature, can be construed, in human thought, only as an act of Divine self-sacrifice.

An intelligent, responsible creation involved the entrance of sin and of suffering. It was no Divine ordination, not even a Divine choice, but simply an inevitable necessity. Only because it must be, it was. Since it must be so (if either moral purity or blessedness is to

be the heritage of created souls), the finite will shall be perfectly free, and finite agency shall have an extended and righteous probation, and the widest possible scope. Rational creatures shall be left to themselves, save wheresoever, without trenching upon moral freedom, the All-Wise and All-Good can interpose by his providence, or wheresoever the patient Holy Spirit can speak to the conscience in the still small voice, or in louder and more alarming tones; but men must, if they are to be free, be left to themselves, to work out all the evil and the good that are in them. All the generations of men, over all the earth and through all the ages—individuals, families, communities, nations, and races—must be left to themselves, to develop, as they may, their capacities, dispositions, and tastes, to found at will their forms of government and their institutions, their customs and their laws, and to pursue their philosophies and sciences and arts, their literature, their commerce, their trades, their pleasures, and their vices.

It clearly arises out of this, that the actual outward course of the world is due not wholly to God, but in great part to man. There is a merciful and righteous and wise Providence over us all, every moment, sustaining and guiding and helping every human being. All the good of the world descends ultimately from God, and from God only. He is the fountain, in Himself, by His Spirit, or through His Providence, out of which all real good descends. But an immense proportion of the occurrences of daily life are manifestly due to the mediate agency of men themselves. On the one hand, the good in these occurrences can sometimes be clearly traced back to the knowledge, the wisdom, and the virtue of men; and

on the other hand, the evil in them as plainly finds its sole origin in their ignorance, folly, and vice. And these last could by no possibility have been prevented except by the subversion of the entire order of moral providence, and by the substitution in its stead of a constant physical intervention,—in other words, by annihilating free agency and establishing the reign of Almighty force. God has no part in such evils; it would be blasphemy to attribute them to Him, and worse blasphemy to pronounce them His ordinations. His ordinations! when they are directly opposed to His nature, His will, and His express command! No; there is a Divine Providence and a Divine Spirit which interpose, wherever it is possible, and which often bring good out of human evil; but free beings are left to themselves, and very largely they create and fashion their own lot, apart from, and even in opposition to, the will of God! The eye of the All-seeing is upon the follies and the sins of His creatures, but He has no part in them. They are not permitted by Him, never permitted, in any just sense, for they are only and always forbidden and denounced. They are not hindered, because they cannot be hindered, without the destruction of free agency, and the utter upturning of the moral order of the world. But they are seen, all seen and known, as the inevitable result of the abuse of moral liberty. There can be no chance and no surprise to omniscience; all the physical and all the moral evils of time were and are before the eternal God, and have their place in the vast scheme of Divine agency, and it is just therefore that we are assured of a universal, all-embracing, endlessly-varied, and yet most gracious probation of men.

If probation is to be a reality, and not a mere name, it must have its free and full course; it must be universal and of all possible forms and kinds. Should any available method or form, any test be untried, the suspicion might arise that the trial had been incomplete and unjust. But no, the human race—always supposing providential interposition and Divine influence, wherever these are possible, without trenching on free agency—the human race, from the first, were left freely to themselves, left to multiply and people the earth, to spread where and how they chose, to follow their judgments, wise or unwise, their inclinations, desires, and tastes, good or evil, to influence one another, and to be influenced in return. The result is an almost infinite variety, individual, social, and national, a variety of conditions and of characters, of happiness and of suffering, of honour and of infamy.

The necessity was, that probation should be perfectly unrestricted, and that the human race — save for the gracious providence and Spirit of God—should be left wholly to themselves. They were left to themselves, and we look with anguish and with terror on the result, on the spectacle which this world presents, and has presented, throughout its entire course. Who can endure to think of its tyrannies, its slaveries, its murders, its wars, its myriad infernal cruelties, its diseases and agonies and woes and deaths, its barbarous and brutalised populations, its hard-working, famishing, wretched masses, in the midst of thousands of the wealthy, the honoured, the pampered, the wasteful, and the heartless? The inequalities of human condition, over all the earth, afflict

every generous soul and confound every open understanding. These shocking disparities cannot be reckoned up, as to body and mind, to personal, local, and social influences, as to rank and wealth, to health and material comforts, to bodily and mental sufferings, privations and disappointments. They are innumerable, and they press on our sight and on our hearts, every moment and from every side. They pain and darken, and burden and torture our minds. We cannot reconcile them, they fill us with horrible doubts, with suspicions and fears. But this is probation, the direct and inevitable consequence of a righteous and real probation—men left to themselves, to their own free agency, and to the free agency and influence of one another. And this consequence withal has resulted, in spite of the frequent and merciful interpositions of Divine Providence, and in spite of the strivings of the Spirit of God, wherever there was an opening for His influence, to touch and stir and redeem the human soul.

But is this the last and all that can be said or thought? Is probation its own entire end—beginning and closing in mere trial and no more? Is it enough, that the human race shall be thoroughly tested and proved, and that what men really are shall be brought out and made manifest? Of what use, we are entitled to ask, could such exposure be, if it led to nothing? It could not add to the eternal foreknowledge of God, and if this be all that is involved in probation, it is only a useless and even cruel exhibition of what was known to Him from eternity. Moral trial, any kind of trial is worse than useless, unless it be a means to some

real and higher end. The refiner casts the gold into the crucible—to test its quality indeed, because otherwise he could not ascertain it. But even to him, this is only a part, and the least important part of his intention. His main purpose is to refine the metal by the furnace-fire, to separate from it every particle of alloy and of dross, and to bring it forth perfectly pure. Moral probation must have the same end, and in the hand of the Great Refiner can mean only purgation and purification. A latent evil in the physical system needs to be brought out before it can be cured; it needs to be brought out, in order to be cured. Latent, but not dormant, it would silently deepen and strengthen, till it became incurable, and could issue only in dissolution. The skilful physician labours to throw out what is latent, to discover and expose all the possible manifestations, in order that he may effectually subdue and conquer it, in its source.

In like manner, the moral evil, latent in human nature, needed to be brought out, before it could be cured, and in order that it might be cured—brought out in all its possible manifestations and forms. Some of the sins and some of the sufferings of the world are, to our apprehensions, clearly preventable—preventable by men themselves and by the interposition of the Almighty, without touching moral freedom. But the necessity was this, complete, universal, impartial probation. Men must be left to themselves, and to their influence on one another, in the exercise of an unrestricted free agency. It is thus, and thus only, that we can face the shocking facts of character and condition on this earth. If the latent evils of humanity were to be faithfully revealed, these

facts must have come forth, for they are the true and necessary results of a real probation. But it is never to be forgotten, at the same time, that the spiritual and divine forces of the universe were not asleep, while sin and suffering had their free course. The Almighty cannot force the created will without annihilating it; but it is ever open to His influence, open to ten thousand influences from above, in perfect consistency with its freedom. In His providence and by His Spirit, God has contended, and is ever contending with all evil. The Great Father hates nothing, wars with nothing, but evil, but He wars with evil, moral and physical; always, everywhere, in every form, He wars with evil—extirpating it by every possible means, and planting and establishing in human souls the reign of truth and right and love and blessedness.

We turn to the acknowledged attributes of The Supreme, His power, His wisdom, His purity, and His love and mercy. In presence of these perfections, we cannot hesitate to believe, without a misgiving, that be the world what it may, the amount of sin and suffering in it at any moment is the very smallest which was possible, consistently with individual free agency and with the entire moral liberty of all mankind, in all ages. Moral and physical evil are both abhorrent to God, and can be tolerated only so far as they either are inpreventable or as they may bear favourably on future results. In themselves, they are both wholly abhorrent to God's nature, and can therefore be suffered only up to the lowest limit of possibility. Other faith than this would confound and darken all righteous and worthy conceptions of God.

On the same immovable ground of the acknowledged attributes of the Most High, we cannot hesitate to believe, without a misgiving, that from the beginning of the world, every human being from his birth to his death, has occupied, and occupies, that position which was and is the very best possible for him, in all the circumstances and necessities of his case, and that nothing better for his earthly and for his higher being could have been secured in consistency with his entire free agency, and with the entire universal free agency of the whole world of men, and of all the past ages. We mean to maintain that the dealings of God with every single individual and with his whole responsible creation can be justly construed, only into the holiest, the wisest, the tenderest, and the most effective discipline which was consistently possible.

The free agency of finite beings is, in one view, a dark mystery, but in another view it is the key which unlocks the problem of creation.

Thus far, it is conceived that most minds are substantially at one. But at this point there arises a dark and wide divergence respecting the eternal destiny of the intelligent universe. The Almighty is represented in the Scriptures as rejoicing in the creation when first it sprang forth at His word. He looked upon the beings and the things He had caused to exist, and pronounced them good, and was glad with a divine satisfaction. But at the final consummation, at the re-creation of the universe, it is believed that, while a vast and countless multitude of rational beings shall be confirmed in everlasting purity and blessedness, a multitude as great or greater shall be

doomed to exist in eternal sin and misery. Very reverently it becomes us to think of the doings and the purposes of Him who is "past finding out." There must be much, very much in them, which it is impossible for a creature to comprehend; but at least this seems certain, that in all which God has done, or shall do, there can be nothing which is contradictory to the great principles of rectitude, wisdom, purity, and love. The question has often been put, Could any pure and happy spirit continue to be happy if the spectacle of fellow-beings in sin and misery were for ever before him? He could not, unless our God-given nature be turned upside down. In all humility, I venture yet further, and ask, Could the Great Father Himself find infinite satisfaction in a triumph which was dashed with vast, though partial defeat? and could He rejoice with an infinite joy, in presence of the eternal sin and misery of a multitude of spirits, or even of a single spirit, to whom He had given being? Our entire nature pronounces it impossible. Our primary, our highest guides within—reason and conscience—pronounce it impossible. And these, be it remembered, are God-given as well as revelation; these are fundamental; they are before, and, in a very profound sense, even above, revelation, for it is through them, and only through them, that we reach the conviction that revelation is divine; and it is through them, and only through them, that we understand, and rationally accept, the deliverances of revelation.

Guided only by the light of reason, to which the discussion in this stage is by consent restricted, I venture to ask, Is it conceivable that the Great Father could create beings

fore-knowing, and, above all, fore-ordaining, that they should be eternally sinful and miserable? They did not seek existence. They were not, till He caused them to be. They could neither accept nor refuse their existence. They were not consulted in it, and could not be. They had no part in it whatever. The will and the power of the Creator formed the one sole cause of their being, and nothing else. Let the question be repeated: Is it conceivable that the Great Father could cause them to exist, fore-knowing and fore-ordaining that they should be eternally sinful and miserable? Who does not shrink back with unutterable horror from the thought? And all so much the more when it lay in the necessity of their finite nature that they were fallible, and that, in one form or other, they were sure to fall.

It is not presumption; it is the instinct of true reverence and love, and of jealousy for the glory of God; it is obedience to the deepest convictions and promptings of our spiritual being which constrains the belief, that to the Creator, the recovery was as sure as the fall of beings, who were all alike his children, and dear to his heart, however low and vile they might become. In the end—though to Him there be neither beginning nor end, neither past nor future, but only an eternal present—in the end, the eye of the Great Father beheld unmingled and unclouded glory, beyond the dark course of sin and suffering,—else neither angel nor man had been created. That dark and guilty course was inevitable, if there were to be responsible creatures at all. But the Creator, with all the moral and spiritual forces of the universe at his command, saw the end in the beginning. Eternity took

up into itself all the issues of the conflict of time, and hallowed and glorified them. That conflict was the medium without which creation had never known purity or rest, but with which and through which, everlasting peace and purity and blessedness were to be secured, through which the restoration and redemption of all created being were to be accomplished, and through which God's universal triumph and his perfect joy in all the works of his hands were to be consummated. In the eternal glance, the finite nature was seen, reclaimed, and redeemed, through evil, from evil. Nor this only—the reclaimed and redeemed nature was seen enriched with new experiences, new motives, new powers, and new energy drawn out of its sufferings and out of its very sins, and thus, only thus, its return to evil was to be rendered impossible for ever.

The difference between eternity and time deserves here to be pondered; for it measures the difference between God's thoughts and the thoughts of man. That difference is immense and incalculable. God inhabiteth eternity! He is the one sole eternal Being, and all beings and things besides are seen by Him in the light of eternity, and are judged and estimated by their relation to eternity. But men find it not difficult only, but impossible to conceive eternity. Human vision, and almost human thought, are limited to this earth, and to an existence of a few years' duration. We really know only this earthly life, and have no definite conception of any other. We believe in immortality; but we know next to nothing of it, have never experienced it, and find it hard, if not impossible, to form a fixed idea respecting it. Practically this earthly life is our all; its interests and occupations and changes are

all but supreme even to the most thoughtful and serious of men; but time and its mere interests and history are as nothing to The Eternal. True, His dealings here with His earthly creatures are wise and righteous and loving; but even these dealings are misconstrued, unless we connect them with our everlasting destiny. *That* is supreme, with God. Our present being is as nothing, save as it relates itself to the endless future. His eye and his heart are upon the vast cycles, opening out for ever, which are before us. Our condition here only—what we possess, what we enjoy, what we suffer, how we are esteemed, through what degradation or honour, what poverty or wealth, what toil, what pain, and what grief we pass—all are light as the small dust of the balance to God, for our eternity is ever before Him. Even to us, if we reflect, these and such things, set in the calm light of reason and of eternity, are less than nothing. We feel, and must feel acutely, the pressure of the evils of life; but life at the longest is not a moment in eternity. It is our everlasting condition that should be, and truly is, our all in all. The solution of the confusions, and troubles, and vices of time, lies in the relation of time to eternity, and in the settled faith that the Great Father is ever doing the very best, which is possible, for each and for all, even now, and that at last, the Almighty Maker shall be the Almighty Redeemer and Restorer of all souls.

If He who knew that sin was inevitable, endured it because He also knew that it was universally and eternally remediable, then the dark mystery of providence would be for ever gloriously solved.

Humbly we here accept this as the very divine truth, in which a human spirit may confidently and thankfully rest.

CHAPTER II.

PHYSICAL AND MORAL EVIL IN THE LIGHT OF REVELATION.

IN FOUR SECTIONS.

SECTION I. EVIL IN THE UNIVERSE.

II. COURSE OF EVIL ON EARTH, AND INFLUENCES DIRECTED AGAINST IT.

III. FINAL CONQUEST OF EVIL THROUGH CHRIST AND CHRISTIANITY.

IV. THE DESTINY OF THE MORAL UNIVERSE.

WRITTEN REVELATION.

WE turn to the ground of positive revelation, a sphere less exciting to the intellect, but more exact and more satisfactory to humble faith. Instead of general reasonings, our appeal shall be to sober facts, recorded in the Hebrew and the Christian Scriptures, and to defined principles issuing from that Supreme Wisdom, which mercifully communicated itself to the world, through various organs, in different ages.

The first fact which meets us in this new sphere is, that man, in his immortal and moral relations, is no longer the only object of investigation. We are ushered into the presence of a new form of rational and responsible being. It is impossible to read the books of the Old and New Testament without distinctly perceiving, that they assert the existence of another and a higher race of intelligences than man. If the authority of these books be admitted, no possible scheme of fair interpretation can set aside this fact. And whether that authority be admitted or not, and whether what these books assert be credited or not, it is certain that they contain this implication.

In itself, it is difficult to see what valid objection can be urged against the idea. It is indeed rather probable

than otherwise, a thing which we might rationally have entertained as a conjecture, even had there been no hint of it from any quarter. It is elevating and quickening: it exalts our conceptions of the Supreme, and of the opulence and glory of the universe. On no principle of sound philosophy can we conceive it assailed. In the nature of the thing, it is not impossible or even unlikely: it is not inconsistent with the rectitude, the wisdom, the power, or the love of the Creator, and it is, in every way, more inspiring and glorious to imagine that man, instead of being the only actual form of responsible existence, belongs to a vaster brotherhood, the countless brotherhood of minds, that he is only a younger branch of the great family, and that there are elder sons of creation, the first-born children of the Highest. This, at all events, is the distinct testimony of the Hebrew and the Christian Scriptures. With those who reject their authority we are not here dealing, except indeed that, throughout, we seek to show that the discoveries of revelation are in harmony with the highest reason, and with the soundest philosophy, while they contain and reflect a light, which unaided reason and human philosophy are incapable of shedding.

But the dark mystery is this, that while revelation announces the existence of a higher order of intelligent beings than men, it announces, at the same time, the introduction of moral, and, of course, physical evil among them also; a portion of the angelic order is fallen, polluted and miserable. How shall this be explained? Does revelation throw any light on this dark fact, which it announces, connecting it in any manner with human

sin? Does it besides unfold, and to what extent, the course of evil on our earth? Does it exhibit the successive influences by which the Great Being has been correcting and conquering evil? And last of all, does it foretell the issue of the conflict between good and evil, and picture a consummation, and point to the ultimate destiny of the moral universe? These are the questions we are now to answer, by the aid of Revelation.

SECTION I.

EVIL IN THE UNIVERSE.

TWO ORDERS OF INTELLIGENT MORAL BEING: I. ANGELS.—SPIRITS.—ABSENCE OF EXTERNAL TEMPTATION.—PROBATION, RESPONSIBILITY. — FIRST SIN. — AGGRAVATIONS. — CREATOR WHOLLY APART FROM IT.—ALL HIS AGENCY OPPOSED TO IT.—II. MAN.—REASON, CONSCIENCE, WILL.—COMPOUND BEING.—STRUCTURE, GUARDED. — EXTERNAL TEMPTATION. — PROTECTION AGAINST INTERNAL NOT POSSIBLE.—LESSER PROTECTION NEEDLESS.—TEMPTATION NOT CAUSE OF SIN.—EXPOSES ONLY WHAT IS WITHIN.—HUMAN SIN REMEDIABLE.—CREATOR NO PART IN IT.—OPPOSING IT.

ANGELS.

I. PROBATION of Angels.—We are taught in the Scriptures that the original fountain of moral evil was not the nature of man, but the nature of angels. And the fact of its introduction among this order of creatures is a strong confirmation of the conclusion, at which we have already arrived, that this dark curse, not owing to the slightest limitation of infinite power or mercy, but in itself and owing to the essential nature of finite intelligence, was absolutely inpreventable.

There are two forms of created moral being, and only two, so far as we have the means of ascertaining—angels and men. Both have fallen, moral evil has found an entrance among both. On the supposition that it was beforehand possible to prevent this issue, is it conceivable that it should not have been prevented in the one case or the other, if not in both? A decree of Heaven, inevitably fixing and causing or necessitating the same dreadful result in the two cases, is a calumny against the Holy One, so atrocious and so foul, that it may not once be named. The natural and rational inference from the fact, that moral evil was realised in both of the two existing orders of created intelligence, is, that it must also certainly have been realised in any other possible

order of created intelligence. Angels and men cannot be looked upon as exceptions: they are examples of moral being, and what happened to them must certainly have happened to any other order, to all possible orders, of creatures. To imagine anything peculiar in them leading to a peculiar result, is to affix a suspicion, as impious as it is groundless, to the character of The Almighty. Created intelligence is necessarily fallible. It has, in fact, fallen.

The materials are exceedingly limited, on which to found an interpretation of the first introduction of sin into the universe. One thing, in any case, we must maintain, without abatement or modification of any kind, —the essential nature of moral evil. That must be the same, whatever the circumstances be in which it shall arise, and among whatever order of creatures. It is the abuse of moral power, a purely voluntary act of the creature, and always wholly in opposition to conscience and reason, and to the will and the entire nature of the Creator. If it be inpreventable, this can be owing to no defect of power or of mercy in the Almighty, but simply to the fact that physical power in whatever amount has no possible application to a moral nature or to the action of moral principles. Will, in its very nature,* cannot be necessitated, for then it would cease to be will: in other words, the prevention of its abuse is impossible. It may be destroyed; but continuing to be what it is, it cannot be necessitated.

The voluntary abuse of moral power by some of the angelic race is distinctly announced in the inspired

* See pp. 95—137.

books, but the circumstances in which it occurred are not revealed. One or two facts of their condition are communicated, and these may here be fitly brought into connection with their apostasy. The constitution, under which they were placed as a race, was one of complete, individual independence and responsibility. Nothing of the hereditary, associated, representationary system, which is found among human beings, existed among them. If there were successive creations, and if the revolving cycles added new hosts to their original number, we are led to conceive that there was no descent from one to another, and that each was essentially independent of all the rest. They must have been capable of influencing one another, and of being influenced. In point of fact, we are left to imagine that it was the example of one or more, and their efforts to seduce, which acted with fatal success on others. But their constitution as a race was one of perfect individuality. Each was essentially independent and left to stand or fall by himself.

It would be presumptuous, with our limited means of judging, to make a positive assertion respecting the special direction in which the virtue of angels was first overcome, nor is it of high importance to be able to determine. But there is a kind of traditional faith on the subject, which is very generally accepted, and which is somewhat countenanced by the little that appears in the sacred writings. It is to the effect, that the original crime of the universe was ambition. But how this, or indeed any other form of evil, first gained an entrance among the angelic order, whether one became corrupt

and contaminated the others, or whether multitudes became possessed with the same thought at the same moment, how the incipient movement of crime arose, by what process, and through what stages it advanced till it reached its mature development, it would be vain to speculate. This much may be hazarded, that whether we look to the peculiar constitution under which angels were placed, or still more to their nature and condition, the remotest possibility of the entrance of moral evil among them would seem to have been precluded. They were pure spirits, allied most nearly to the Great Spirit, the Creator. We are led to conceive of them, besides, as an exalted form of created intelligence. Intellect, conscience, affection, in them found a grand, though necessarily a limited development. Their moral nature also was fully endowed and perfectly pure, without the remotest taint of pollution, or the faintest tendency to evil. It was besides involved in their condition and their nature, that they were absolutely exempted from the possibility of external temptation. On the one hand, in their purely spiritual being, they were beyond the reach of the influences of matter. On the other hand, they were alone in the creation, the only created intelligences existing, and they were all holy. External temptation was impossible. There was no quarter from which it could arise. They were infallibly secure on all sides, except from within. Should moral evil ever have place amongst them it could only be of their own originating, entirely the product, the mere native choice of their own wills, unprompted, unsolicited, perfectly spontaneous.

Amidst the conditions that have been named, all full

of promise, and fitted to secure a triumphant result, the trial of created being was made for the first time in the history of the universe. Probation is only an aspect of responsibility. It is not so much a special act of The Supreme, as a necessity in the nature of an intelligent moral being. Such a being is necessarily proved, and is necessarily responsible. It results from the possession of reason and conscience, it is inseparable from the doctrine of God, and it allies itself with the doctrine of an immortal life. What beings endowed like angels were, and what they did, could at no moment be a matter of indifference. There was a supreme Father and Lord, to whom they were under deep and immovable obligations, and to whom they were ever accountable. No expressed purpose or method of probation on the part of The Creator was required, for the thing was involved in the nature of the beings themselves, and in the relation in which they stood to the eternal Guardian of righteousness and truth. He who formed them took, and could not but take, account of them, and knew and marked, every moment, whether they were faithful or unfaithful to the laws of their being, and to the immutable principles of right.

The result of the first great trial of created being in the universe must for ever abide an overwhelming mystery. Some of the angelic order fell from their integrity, abused their moral power, voluntarily separated themselves from eternal truth and right, and therefore from the God of both, voluntarily chose evil. We must ask no cause for this ; it had no rational cause. It was not an intelligible effect of circumstances (for then it had not

been crime), but an illegal and monstrous abuse of causative power. It was not according to any law, but, in its very essence, was contrary to all law, a confounding and inexplicable anomaly. We must ask no ground, no reason, for moral evil, because moral evil is essentially and only unreason. The created will sets at defiance conscience, and reason, and law, and love, and even The Creator Himself, the Being who formed it, and who also could in an instant destroy, as He formed it.*

The entrance of evil into God's universe, under any conceivable conditions, is awful; but crime in angelic beings seems to have some features of atrocity peculiar to itself. The dignity and the strength of their natures, their place in the scale of creation, and their vast spiritual endowments, deepen our horror at their fall, and invest it with an extraordinary guiltiness. And then the absence of all external temptation imparts to it a character of pure gratuitousness, a native, inherent malignity, which we can conceive nothing beyond.

It is no presumption to pronounce without a misgiving, what that evil must have been in the Divine sight, which in itself was so inexpressibly malignant, and which also was fraught with such ruin to rational beings. We need entertain no fear of speaking too freely, too loudly, in such a case. That first sin of the universe was, and could only have been, wholly repugnant to the holiness, the wisdom, and the will of the Great Being; had it not been so, it had not been evil. His only aspect towards it must have been unutterable abhorrence. Had it been preventable, it must have been, would have been pre-

* See p. 176.

vented. No secret inclination of God favoured it. No judgment of His, founded on its prospective consequences, accorded with it. No permission of His was extended to it. He only forbade it, only hated it, only acted against it, had only, from the first, thought, and felt, and acted so as to prevent, resist, retrieve, and destroy it. The strength and perfection of angelic intellect, the pure spirituality of the angelic nature, and the absolute exemption of the angelic order from the possibility of external temptation, were so many bulwarks, we might have predicted, impregnable bulwarks which God had erected against the approach of moral evil. If it was introduced, nevertheless, and if angels fell, the fact must remain for ever a dark and unfathomable mystery. But the Creator stands wholly apart from it and opposed to it. There remain to us, in spite of it, untouched and untainted, His immaculate purity, His suspicionless love. These are the last stronghold and hope of the moral universe. That stronghold abides amidst the crimes and the woes of angels or of men!

II. Probation of Man.—On a new theatre, and in altered circumstances, the trial of created being was again conducted. Conscience, reason, volition, the essential conditions of responsibility, are and must be presupposed, else probation is a meaningless name. Nor is it at all certain, that we have now to imagine a lower scale and a narrower range of intelligence, and of moral power. The human nature was strong, within its constituted sphere, and strongly guarded against the possibility of sin. Man, not less than angels, was able to distinguish between truth and error, right and wrong. His nature, like theirs, was pure and untainted, without pre-inclination or bias, in any one if its constituent parts, to error or evil.

There are two opposite principles, and only two, so far as we are capable of judging, on which intelligent beings might have been constituted. Either an entire race might be created at once, or it might propagate itself in successive generations. Either all might, at the same time, and in the same circumstances, be left to voluntary self-development, or the successive generations might, in the fact of their succession, be dependent in measure the one on the other, as well in their outward circumstances as for moral influences. The one we may call the individual, and the other the hereditary principle; the one the independent, and the other the dependent, associated, representationary principle.

In the case of angels, the first of these principles, in the case of men, the second was adopted. Some hints* have already been thrown out on the peculiarities of a constitution thus based. Its effect, as a restraining if not an impelling force, is a fact of every-day observation and experience. The parent cannot easily divest himself of the thought that his character must affect his child for evil or for good. Relations, friends, even members of civil society, in their intercourse with one another, are conscious of an amount of influence arising from the same cause. If we go back in conception to the great progenitor of humanity, the effect of this principle is not to be estimated. He cannot but have been alive to so manifest and so momentous a contingency. The thought must have appealed to him with overwhelming force, that his choice of obedience or disobedience was certain to affect mightily for good or for evil, not only his immediate descendants, but the entire race. Was not a new and singular aid to his fidelity thus created, and can we mistake in believing that it was under this special and powerful influence, added to a thousand other protecting and inspiring motives, that the first probation of humanity was conducted? The simple narrative in the book of Genesis suggests all this, but no more. Shall we imagine something more and deeper, underlying the history—a mysterious, divine arrangement, not expressed, but implied, and, at the least, conceivable? This has in fact been done; imagination, mere imagination has been set to work, for the history itself contains not a hint of anything beyond what has been named. Shall

* See pp. 189, &c.

we, in the subtlety of our logic, and in our presumptuous desire to fathom and to expound the purposes and the ways of The Eternal, construct a formal "covenant of works" between man and his Maker?

It is not doubted that the first man was in the most natural and strict sense a representative man, the original fountain and head of the human race. But was he more than this, and was he by a special divine ordination constituted the legal—the covenant—head of humanity? It is enough to ask, in return, Where is the covenant, if it ever existed? where was it entered into, and when? who were the parties contracting? what were the terms laid down? were they embodied in a formal document? where was it deposited? has any human being ever had access to it? The whole is mere, sheer imagination, without one atom of solid fact for its basis. As for the idea that God was to reckon, and did reckon, that what the first man did was virtually done by all his descendants, and the additional idea that God imputed the first man's crime to them, and doomed them in a mass to eternal perdition, on account of it, both seem very near to unmitigated blasphemy, and are wholly without foundation, either in the Old Testament or in the New.

All will be ready to admit that a deep injury was suffered by mankind through the crime of their progenitor. If he, in his circumstances, yielded to temptation, woe to them with his example before their eyes. Nor this alone, but ever, from age to age, as instances of evil multiplied, the force of example and the ensnaring and corrupting power of sin were sure to grow stronger and stronger. So much is clear and undeniable. But was

there something superadded to this necessary corrupting force of evil—gratuitously or judicially superadded, by a special ordination of God? With the solitary exception of the first man, who was created pure, were all human beings, thereafter, in their original constitution, tainted and defective, as he was not? The doctrine of the Fatherhood of God and the childship of all souls shields us from this fearful impiety. "We are all His offspring" is the quotation which the apostle Paul, addressing the men of Athens, stamped with his inspired authority. God can create nothing impure. But the glaring fact standing out from the first probation is blindly overlooked. The human soul though originally pure was capable of defiling itself, and did defile itself, as indeed it could be defiled only by itself. The first man, in circumstances more favourable than ours, sinned and fell, and we like him sin and fall. But the cause, in his case and in ours, is not an irresistible compulsion, and not an original error or defect in the structure of the soul, which could have been prevented or remedied. It is simply and wholly owing to the free but perverse created will. Moral evil is only the voluntary abuse of moral freedom and moral power.

It has been suggested, that the original crime of the universe may possibly have been ambition. Be this as it may, it deserves consideration that in the case of man a wise and merciful provision was made, in the very structure of his being, against this particular vice. The new creature was spiritual, but he was material also. In one part of his nature, he was brought down to the level of the brute earth on which he walked, and in his very

composition was furnished with a perpetual check to ambition and a perpetual motive to humility.

In one other point, the conditions of human and of angelic probation were impressively distinguished. Man was not exempted from external temptation. The inspired history conveys the distinct intimation that it was by influence from without that his virtue was assailed and vanquished. And why was this suffered? we instinctively and instantly ask. Could not the Almighty have hindered the tempter from gaining access to his victim? Could He not have prevented the temptation from being put before man? Undoubtedly He could. No consistent reply except this can be made to such questioning. So far as mere power is concerned, the Almighty could, not at one moment only, but at any moment, and through the whole course of man's after existence, have prevented the kind of external temptation from which he suffered. But virtue, which had thus been placed within a perpetual shelter, and been the result not of man's choice, but of God's Omnipotence, had been worthless, not virtue at all, in any worthy sense. Nor can it be forgotten, that, in the earlier history of the moral universe, the assault, which had proved so disastrous to created integrity, had come not from without but from within; and against this, the highest source of danger, there neither was nor could be any possible protection. Protection from the lesser danger, had it been ever so complete, could have availed nothing when the greater danger, in all its force, must necessarily have been ever present.

We must not allow ourselves to be troubled by a

difficulty which is in great part superficial, and far more apparent than real. In the condition of human nature, as it is constituted on our earth, men inevitably influence one another. Their acts of evil, their writings, their words, their very looks, may and do often convey temptation. There is not a human being who is not solicited to evil, every day of his life. The position of the Head of the human race, as it is described in the sacred history, was in this respect far freer from peril than that of any of his descendants.

Nor is it to be forgotten that external temptation has simply the power which we ourselves give to it, but no more. It is trial, something to be borne, something which is to prove and expose what is within us, but it puts nothing there, and can only bring out what is already within. Temptation is not compulsion; no amount of temptation can constitute a compulsion; if it did there could be no crime in yielding to it. But there is power in us to resist were we to call it forth, ever there must be power sufficient to resist, if we chose to exert it, else there is no probation, and there can be no crime. Moral evil is only and wholly the voluntary abuse of moral power, nothing else. Probation supposes temptation, trial of one kind or other, and of what kind does not essentially affect the question. Probation means that the being is to evince in some way what is within him, is to be brought to some test, in order to manifest how he will determine for himself, whether he will legitimately exert his power of choice, or will misuse that power and choose unwisely and wickedly. Temptation, from whatever quarter addressed to him, is but a presentation to

his mind, nothing more. Whether he will welcome or dismiss what is presented to him is to be seen, but it depends on himself alone. All the power he can have, he has, in the constitution of his nature. And that power is in no degree weakened, or even in the least affected, it is only tested by the presence of temptation. Temptation cannot alter our power, it can only reveal our use of it; in no way can it cause evil in us, it can only show whether we be such that we will do evil.

At the same time, the fact is memorable and impressive, that man was assailed by a fellow-creature, and that this assault from without was the occasion, though not the cause of his crime and fall. It is a teaching on two sides; first, as to the nature of fallen spirits, and second, as to the destiny of man. On the one hand, moral evil in angels is shown to be in its working what we had judged it to be in its origin, marked by a peculiar malignity. On the other hand, we can hardly fail to feel, that there was not the same unmitigated blackness, the same atrocity of character, the same mere native viciousness of will in human crime, as in the crime of angels. The presence of external temptation is a marked peculiarity, which to all human conception takes from the darkness and depth of the fall, in itself considered.

But human sin, distinguish it how we may from sin in angels, was real and dark, and can have been only abhorrent to the Holy One. The wilful abuse of moral power by man, his abandonment of the eternal law of conscience and reason, his choice of evil, that is, of dishonour and perdition, must have been an unmitigated abomination in the sight of heaven. In the constitution

under which God had placed man, in the very structure of his being, in the new and peculiar nature with which He had endowed him, in all His agency, and in every aspect of it, He had shown that such an issue could be only and unutterably hateful to him. And if this second probation of created being terminated, like the first, in the entrance of moral evil, at least the Great God stands wholly apart from it, and wholly opposed to it. The immaculate purity, the suspicionless love of the Creator abide. These are the last stronghold and hope of the moral universe. That stronghold abides amidst the temptations, apostasies, and deaths of this lower world!

SECTION II.

THE COURSE OF EVIL ON EARTH AND INFLUENCES DIRECTED AGAINST IT.

I. DIVINE BENIGNITY.—LONGEVITY OF EARLY RACES OF MEN.—II. DIVINE JUDGMENT.—DELUGE.—GEOLOGICAL AND MORAL DIFFICULTIES.—MERCY AND JUDGMENT.—III. EXCEPTIONAL ELECTIVE SYSTEM.—JEWISH DISPENSATION.—ITS ORIGIN, LOVE TO MAN.—NO PARTIALITY, FAVOURITISM.—EXPEDIENT FOR PRESERVATION OF TRUTH.—HOW FAR EFFECTIVE.

I. DIVINE Benignity.—Man is here our subject, and in connection with him, the Divine providence on earth, and the successive methods which The Supreme has adopted, in His controversy with evil. Human sin is remediable; by Almighty mercy it has been remedied. The God who was unutterably opposed to its entrance has engaged in an extended warfare with it, the aim of which is the punishment, in order to the extirpation of that only thing in the universe which He hates. Providence is the outspread plan of The Most High for putting down sin; it is the succession of Divine methods of acting upon the world, of saving and regenerating that power of free will in whose voluntary abuse alone evil originated, of redeeming and bringing back undutiful and rebellious children to the feet of their Father in contrition and in faith, and of attaching them for ever to his character and his throne.

The marked feature in the Divine discipline of the world, throughout its entire course, has been mercifulness. From the moment when in paradise words of grace were de-

posited within the first announced penalty, till holy love was incarnated in the person of Jesus Christ, and from that period till now, The Most High has dealt with man, not on the principle of exact justice, but on the principle of undeserved, unsolicited, Almighty mercy. The manifest intention of the Infinite Being has been, not to overwhelm his creatures by righteous retribution, but to win back their affections by unmerited kindness; not to crush them with his avenging arm, but to break the world's heart by tenderness and compassion, and to bring down upon it the insupportable pressure of an infinite grace.

But this large and universal benignity, peculiar to no age, but common to all ages alike, is not now before us. We select a special and singular manifestation of Divine compassion, which belonged exclusively to the early annals of our earth. The longevity of the first races of mankind is plainly asserted in the sacred writings. With the bearings of this fact as a question of physiology or ethnology, and with its evidences on independent grounds, or with its difficulties, we meddle not. As a fact resting on the authority of the Hebrew Scriptures, we take it up here; and it is of importance to us, chiefly when viewed in connection with the foregoing history of the temptation and the apostasy. In the representation which is given of these dark events, and among the conditions of man's trial, this forewarning is inserted: "In the day thou eatest of the fruit of the tree thou shalt surely die."

Moral evil is death. We have seen * that this is not

* See pp. 198, &c.

so much a Divine ordination, which owes its force simply to the Supreme Will, as a fact which lies in the nature of things, and is a necessity in itself. It could not be otherwise. Moral evil is death begun in the soul, a positive loss of being,* disorder, derangement, perdition. The eternal fact was and must have been realised in man, the instant he abused his moral power. But there was a positive arrangement of the Holy One superadded to the moral necessity, and inner, spiritual death was ordained to be connected with an outer physical dissolution. He who abhorred moral evil, so constituted man as to furnish him in the death of his material nature with a visible image of the fearful destiny, for which that evil was preparing his spiritual nature. Physical death is one of the divine instruments for retrieving moral death, for impressing and alarming the soul, for effecting a moral resurrection, and for regenerating and restoring moral life. In itself, withal, it is a visible and perpetual witness to the Divine thought of sin.

Physical as well as moral death was contained in the original forewarning, "In the day thou eatest, thou shalt surely die." But it was not at once inflicted in its lower meaning; the infliction was strangely and long, very long, withheld, and not till it could no longer be withheld, was it suffered to fall down on the guilty. It had been strictly righteous, if the condemnatory sentence had immediately taken effect in all its physical as well as in all its moral meaning, the instant that crime was perpetrated. It had been more than righteous, it had been most merciful, to have delayed even for a brief period

* See p. 141.

the execution of the dreaded sentence. But the life of the antediluvian patriarchs was preternaturally, at all events, unusually extended. We are not careful to uphold the perfect exactness of the record, as to the length of antediluvian life; but it was unusually extended; that is enough; and there are independent considerations in abundance to satisfy any reasonable inquirer that this must have been the case. The meaning of so benignant a reprieve it is impossible to mistake. To the men of that age, it ought to have spoken as impressively as if a preternatural hand had traced in letters of light, on the firmament over their heads, this heavenly gospel, "The Lord is long-suffering, and full of compassion; He willeth not that any should perish, but that all should turn to Him and live." These men must have been blind if they failed to see, that the Most High was loath to inflict retribution; and they must have been dead and dull of soul, if they failed to feel that He had adopted this gracious method of touching their hearts and restoring them to himself, to duty, and to life.

For more than fifteen hundred years, this arrangement of singular mercy, this subduing and mighty influence, was brought to bear on the world. Shall we doubt that multitudes must have understood and felt its power, and bethought them of the Living and Loving One? And yet, at the close of this period of grace, the condition of the earth as a whole, and the prevailing character of human society, are represented as inexpressibly dark. An unerring authority declares that "All flesh had corrupted their ways." "The imagination of the thoughts of man's heart was evil, only evil, continually." The earth

was filled with violence, and blood, and crime. But the fact was only and wholly an offence to the Almighty. The maturity of moral evil could not be less abhorrent to Him than its first upspringing. Its wide ramifications and its more atrocious developments were ever more and more at variance with His will than its incipient form. All His agency, like all His nature, as they had been from the first, now were, and must have been, directed against human sin. We behold Him adopting the most wonderful, the most subduing, and the best adapted methods for putting it down, and at last unveiling a new attribute of His own nature for this purpose. For the first time in the history of the universe, Divine mercy was revealed. It had been known from the beginning that God was love, but it had never yet been seen that He was mercy. To the unfallen and the holy of his rational offspring He had exhibited infinite tenderness; but that He could spare the guilty, till now had never been made manifest. It was made manifest now, and for the putting down of sin the Almighty laid open the sacred depths of his own Being. If then, in these circumstances, that dark mystery, a rebellious created will, persisted in drawing around itself ever thicker darkness, if moral evil developed itself in new forms, and spread itself ever wider and wider, if the degeneracy of man only deepened and darkened, with time, at least The Creator stood wholly apart from it, and opposed to it. All Light is with Him! Only Light is with Him! All darkness is from the creature!

II. Divine Judgment.—The doctrine of a deluge, dating somewhat above four thousand years ago, stands connected with the discoveries and conclusions of the science of geology. It is not to be concealed that that doctrine as it was earlier understood, as it is even yet generally understood, is opposed at least to the conclusions of science. Geologists, with scarce an exception, have decided that anything like a universal submersion of the world by water, at the date supposed, is not to be believed. There is not only no evidence of such a thing, but there is, it is alleged, very sufficient proof to the contrary. But scientific men, who have at the same time bowed to the authority of revelation, suggest a free interpretation of the statements of the Hebrew Scriptures without endangering geological inductions. A deluge, partial as compared with the whole surface of the earth, is not inconsistent with observed facts, but rather favoured by them.

Only a part of the globe, in these early ages, was inhabited, and within this part all the human population, as well as the lower forms of animal life, were congregated. A submersion of this part was, virtually, a general deluge, a sudden and universal destruction of human and animal life on the earth. View how we may the question as to the number of the earth's inhabitants at that time, suppose the human population indefinitely smaller than it is now, the mind can only recoil with

horror from the idea of an immense mass of life and of intelligence—an entire race of beings, with only eight exceptions, in a moment swept into eternity.

It is criminal and vain for men to constitute themselves judges of the acts of the Great Being, as if they could penetrate into all their grounds, could trace out all their ramifications, and could estimate all their effects. But in our feebleness and short-sightedness, there are some things here which we are able to understand. The Father of minds must ever have contemplated, not any single generation—for example, not that single generation alone, on which a fate so awful descended—but all the countless generations of men to the end of time. His rectitude, His wisdom, His power, and His love consulted, indeed, for each individual, but for each individual in his connection with the great whole. Without defect of justice or of kindness even to one, God must ever have consulted for the greatest good of all. Mere forbearance, mere love to one, himself only considered, might have proved the deepest injury to multitudes; mere forbearance, mere love to a single generation, itself only considered, might have proved the deepest injury to countless generations to come.

This idea fixed in our minds, we have then to recall one of the leading principles on which the Infinitely Wise, from the first, conducted his agency among men. The principle was this: to connect physical with moral evil; or rather, since physical evil, not by a Divine ordination, but in itself, necessarily, is the result of moral evil; it was to arrange and distribute the forms of physical evil, so as most efficiently to act upon moral

evil, for its correction and extinction. For example, the divine method was to exhibit, in the death of the body, a type of the ruin of the soul, and by the outward, to inflict the penalty, and yet also to provide the antidote for inward evil. Death and all the outward evils of the world, their distribution, their times, their forms, the numbers, and the particular individuals on whom they fall, are ordained instruments for putting down sin. In this view physical death, whether of one or of many, presents to us no difficulty in connection with the Supreme providence. It must ever be appalling, and is meant to be so, and the greater the number whom it overtakes at one time, and the suddenness of its infliction, and the more revolting its form, so much the more appalling must it be. But it presents no inexplicable difficulty.

The moral condition of the world, at the time of the deluge, has already been described. It was a condition of deep and wide-spread degeneracy. In spite of all the influence of that singular mercy of Heaven, which for fifteen hundred years had been continued, and although in that period innumerable triumphs must have been won, it was a condition of deep and wide-spread degeneracy. It may occur to the least reflecting, that if, descending from a pure origin, men had thus degenerated, and sin had spread its ravages so wide and so far, the result must have been beyond conception terrible, if the world that then was had been suffered to perpetuate and propagate itself. This was not suffered. In infinite wisdom, and, still more markedly, in infinite love, it was not suffered. Suddenly, and even awfully, the fountain

was stopped from which the polluted stream of human life issued; and from a new source, and that comparatively pure, the future generations of men were caused to spring forth. The universal deluge, which followed a distinguished and extended act of Divine mercy, lowers as a huge, dark cloud over the early history of the world. But while we gaze upon it thoughtfully, there shoot out from it, ever and again, gleams of light withal, and within it we can believe that there glowed the pure, living brilliance of Uncreated love. The deluge was emphatically an act of judgment. In its first and prominent aspect, it was an appalling judgment, and without question it was designed to influence the fears, as before The Highest had influenced the affections and the hopes of men. This act of Divine judgment, like a lofty and massive column, which all the world thereafter might see, rises up at the commencement of the second epoch of human history; and upon it was written the warning, in letters which all the world might read, "Flee from wrath to come."

It is more striking still that the impression produced by this mighty warning was deepened by a minor and subsidiary economy, and human life, which had heretofore been unusually extended, was now contracted to nearly its present limits. Men looked around upon their race, and beheld them falling fast and thick, as the ears of corn before the reaper's sickle. It was as if in all directions, now to one and then to another, the secret and irresistible summons were conveyed, "Come to judgment;" "Prepare to meet thy God." The deluge at the commencement of the epoch, with a loud and terrific

voice, cried to men, "Flee from wrath to come;" "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the Living God." Onward through the whole course of that epoch this voice was re-echoed, in lower but hardly less emphatic tones, by each death that closed a now shortened life: "Flee from wrath to come;" "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the Living God."

For a long series of years the influence of judgment, though mingled with mercy, was the power brought to bear upon the heart of the world. That it was effective, in its measure, and that multitudes were through it, as the medium of the Divine Spirit, awakened, regenerated, and saved, we dare not doubt. But the root of evil was not destroyed. The curse in the heart of the world was not extirpated: "The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men. Behold they are all gone out of the way; they are together become unprofitable. There is none that understandeth and seeketh after God." But this is certain; the aspect of The Eternal towards this renewed proof of the inveteracy, the indestructibility of moral evil, must have been, as it had been from the first, one of infinite abhorrence. If such was the actual result of all the discipline of providence, at least we are sure that it was not because, but in the face of all that The Most High had done.

III. Exceptional Elective System.—From the beginning the Divine economy of the world had been universal

and indiscriminate. Up to this time there had been no distinction of individual, nation, or class. The original revelation, announced immediately on the introduction of sin and formally renewed after the deluge, was given to man, to universal man; it was for all nations and all times. The ampler and brighter communications, given at the coming of Christ, which have survived already nearly two thousand years, it is not doubted, are, in like manner, indiscriminate and universal. There has been only one comparatively short interval, which stands out an exception to all the rest of human history. For twelve or thirteen hundred years, an elective system, the Jewish economy, was instituted. This solitary exception, anomalous in its character, has proved a grievous offence to the minds of many. The reasonings of those who reject the authority of revelation, and their ridicule, and their embittered taunts, and their poisoned satire, have been very mainly directed against this fact. The God of the Bible, it is maintained, is a Being who acts on a system of favouritism, and is governed by feelings of partiality, and not by large and generous and universal love. And it would be unfair not to acknowledge, that the language of too many of the advocates of Christianity has often furnished sufficient ground for such an allegation.

The first and grand aim of the Jewish Institute it is surely not possible to mistake. Manifestly, it was a peculiar expedient for the preservation of that truth, which, having been twice formally committed to the whole world, had each time been all but lost. The original revelation conveyed to man immediately after the entrance of evil had been re-announced after the

deluge. But it had been awfully obscured and corrupted, so that hardly a trace of it, in its genuine simplicity, could be discovered. The nations had "changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to four-footed beasts, and to creeping things." The simple message of forgiveness and mercy was buried out of sight. It was misunderstood or forgotten, and in its stead, vain, and multiplied, and revolting ceremonies had been introduced.

There remained one mode of saving divine truth from utter extinction. Diffused and dispersed over the whole earth, the Divine light had been all but quenched in the encompassing darkness. But the scattered rays were now re-collected and gathered into one focus. Revealed truth, the common property of all, and therefore the special interest of none, and on this account almost universally thrown aside and abandoned, must be committed to some one guardianship, be placed within a new shelter, and furnished with a new kind of protection. It must be deposited in the hands of one people, and be guarded and defended as it had never been before, by national partialities and peculiarities, and by a singular and imposing, and withal significant array of ordinances and ceremonies.

Very evidently, selection was inevitable, the selection of one tribe of men. In the necessity of its nature the expedient was elective, and it could have had no realisation, except on this principle. If such an expedient was to be adopted, one people must be chosen out of all the nations of the earth, and an honour must be conferred on one, in which none of the others could share. Very

peculiar advantages also, and a very peculiar relation to God must belong to the selected tribe. But it is never to be forgotten, that from beginning to end, the institution had its origin in Divine care, not for one people, but for the whole world. Of necessity one people was selected, of necessity peculiar honours and peculiar advantages were conferred on them. But the reason, the ground, of the economy was not partiality to one, but ineffable and equal solicitude for all. It was the world's truth which the Jews were selected to guard, and it was not for their sakes, but for the sake of the world, and for them only in common with the rest of the world, that the selection was made. As the wisest and most effective method of influencing the world, this anomalous, exceptional expedient was introduced, in order that in new and happier circumstances all restriction might in due time be removed, and the light, which ever was the property of the world, might again be shed upon it, indiscriminately, universally.

It is very mournful that Christians have laboured to form what was so obviously an exception, into a rule and a principle. This is the more sad, when we dispassionately look into the character of the Jewish institute as a whole, and into the judgment pronounced on it by the apostles of Christianity. That it was a Divine ordination is a sufficient proof that, for its peculiar purpose, it was wise and right and good. But it was essentially a temporary expedient, and as essentially it was adapted to the limited end which it contemplated, and to the state of the world at the time of its institution. That was the religious infancy of mankind, and Judaism

was therefore, at its best, an infantile system. It was throughout an appeal to the senses, and to the mind chiefly through the senses. It was besides addressed chiefly to the fears of men, and to their higher principles and feelings chiefly through their lower emotions. It made use of a succession of enlarged pictures (like object lessons), of imposing forms, of gorgeous and elaborate ceremonies; of peculiar dresses, furniture, localities, and times.

Shall we go back to the state of infancy, now that we have reached manhood? What was divinely wise and right, as connected with a particular age and a particular end, would be monstrous after that end has been gained and that age has passed away. Shall we long for the pictures and symbols and puerilities of childhood, now that we are amidst the living reality and maturity of religion? Shall we expect that the twilight shall reveal a single thing which the day has left in darkness? Shall we import the principles of a temporary expedient into an enduring and universal economy? Shall we explain by Judaism the higher doctrines and laws of Christianity? The later may, and must, throw a flood of light on the earlier; but it is impossible, in the very nature of the thing, that Judaism can add one particle of light, in any single direction, to the doctrines of Christianity, which themselves contain not.

But the twilight is Divine as well as the noonday, though it would be foolish to place in the twilight, for the purpose of better distinguishing, objects which are already placed in the blaze of day. The Jewish institute was of God; and for its purpose and its age was divinely wise

and right and good. For the sake of the world, and as a means of acting upon it, for the sake of preserving for the world that truth which, universally made known, had been well-nigh lost, The Almighty determined to deposit it for a time in the hands of one particular nation. It was not and could not be in vain. On the one hand, by this expedient nothing was taken from the general world. All the spiritual and moral truth which it had retained it possessed still, as if no such expedient had been introduced. But a new influence, and a new motive to inquiry, were set to work, and a new source of information was created. Among the selected people themselves, it was impossible that a degree of illumination, otherwise unattainable, should not have been reached. Their entire national economy was a training, an education in the highest truth ; a school, in which they were brought up to faith in One Living and True Jehovah, in His attributes, His providence, and His salvation. And we can hardly doubt that the circumstance of such peculiar distinctions enjoyed by one people, of such peculiar pretensions to religious light as they put forth, and still more of such actual religious knowledge as they clearly possessed, must have exerted a powerful influence on surrounding nations, far and near. Even had no direct efforts in any way been made by the Jews themselves for diffusing their religion, surrounding nations might be impelled to come to them, to inquire and examine. Proselytes to Judaism were not hindered, if they were not directly invited, and multitudes, who had no thought of becoming proselytes, might yet be deeply influenced and extensively instructed. There are a few scattered facts in

this connection, which awaken almost unlimited hope. The mission of Jonah to Nineveh, the extensive commercial and political relations of the Jews during the reign of several of their kings, their various and lengthened captivities, and the coming of the Eastern Sages to inquire after the birth of Christ,—all suggest far more than they directly express, in reference to the influence of the Jewish institute upon the rest of mankind.

But it is confessed on all hands that the moral condition of the world at the close of the thirteen hundred years was only deplorable. Darkness covered the earth, and gross darkness the nations; and even the light in the holy land was dim and impure. The Jews had abused and corrupted their own economy. Though they had not sunk into idolatry, the prevailing views of the character of God, of the nature of religion, and even of human virtue, were miserably false, and the general moral reputation of Judea could scarcely descend to a lower point than it had reached.

But The Great Being had no part in this issue. We behold Him only guarding against it, introducing a new and anomalous expedient divinely fitted to prevent it. Throughout, as from the first, His attitude towards moral evil was that of an irreconcilable antagonist. And now also, if the darkness, ungodliness, and vice of the wide world were such as we have found, at least He was wholly apart from it and opposed to it.

SECTION III.

FINAL CONQUEST OF EVIL THROUGH CHRIST AND CHRISTIANITY.

I. INCARNATION OF DIVINITY.—II. NEW EXPRESSION AND MEDIUM OF MERCY.—III. PERFECT HUMANITY.—IV. NEW REVELATION OF SPIRITUAL TRUTH.—V. NEW FOUNTAIN AND CHANNEL OF THE HOLY GHOST.

DIVINE DISCIPLINE.

I. INCARNATION of Divinity.—Moral Providence, in the view which we have hitherto taken of it, is a prolonged and varied discipline of the mind and heart of the world. It is a series of merciful appeals to the will of man, and of divine methods for subduing it and bringing it back to the sway of conscience and of God. It is a continued but ever-shifting contest with moral evil, in order to its extirpation. That the contest must have been, in its measure, successful is not doubted. If, with all the resistance made to it, and all the corrective discipline directed against it, the evil of the world was yet so vast in amount, what must it have been had it been altogether unresisted or assailed by less formidable powers! In spite of its virulence, its insidiousness, its tenacity, almost indestructibility, the world had been really advancing, advancing towards a destiny of exalted good. Each peculiar moral instrumentality in the early ages, we may conceive, impelled the human race so far onward in its course; the successive ages witnessed a greater and still greater advance; until "the fulness of the times" arrived, the filling up and completion of the necessary period, during which all the introductory and preparatory discipline through which the world had to

pass was conducted, and everything was ripe for the last, the best, the universal, the triumphant form of religion, which shall endure to the end of time.

What the essential meaning and the deep design of this final economy must be, is sufficiently apparent from the nature of all the previous dispensations. This is the prolongation, and is to be the victorious conclusion, of the Almighty's controversy with human sin ; the last step in that spiritual education of the world which He has been conducting from the first ; His last appeal to the will of man ; His last method of subduing, restoring, and sanctifying it, and of reuniting to Himself his apostate and rebellious children. No marvel, if here we behold an unveiling of Divine resources such as the world never before saw and never can see again. The incarnation and the cross are the names of two events that stand alone in all time. Together they form a luminous centre, around which the history of man arranges itself, —the past all looking towards this central point, and the future all branching out from it. Mystery and openness, weakness and power, glory and ignominy, are here in marvellous combination, eloquent of the presence of a wonder-working and almighty hand.

Is it asked, Why was this instrumentality not made use of at an earlier period in the history of man? If it be so efficient, why were four thousand years suffered to elapse before it was introduced? Why did not The Incarnate appear at the commencement instead of the end of the ages? It is possible to give more than the answer to this question which would content an unreasoning and simple piety. "God's time is the best;"

and were nothing more possible, this were sufficient. But something more is possible in this case. To [illegible] extent we can distinctly see, here, both the wisdom and the rectitude of the divine procedure, in suffering a long period of time to elapse before the final dispensation was introduced.

In the beginning of the ages, such a mystery as the incarnation, and still more the crucifixion, could have seemed only a gratuitous and wasteful expenditure of divine resources. At that period it was unknown, even unimaginable, what moral evil, in the human nature, really was, and with what consequences it was fraught. A corrective, loudly demanded at a latter period, had been, at first, a mere misapplication. The evil must be suffered to develop itself before its radical nature could be discovered, and before the antidote which it really needed could admit of being applied. Evil did develop itself awfully, and showed that it demanded for its cure an unheard-of, a mysterious remedy. In putting it down, The Supreme was acting not for a single generation, but for all the generations of men to the end of time : may we not even imagine, that He was acting for all intelligent beings in the universe, and so as to correct in the most effectual way that which is the one source of evil anywhere and everywhere? For men's sake, and for the sake of the whole intelligent universe, an exhaustive revelation must be made of what spiritual evil really was, else it had been only superficially cured and its deep root had been unreached. Our world, in this respect, probably is a place of sad but priceless instruction to the universe, instruction on the most profound and awful subject. It

is here chiefly, that a kind of knowledge, most of all helpful to all created intelligences, and nowhere else to be gotten, is to be obtained.

In the abodes of the unfallen and the recovered, purity is unmingled: in this world of ours both purity and evil are found, and found in direct and direful conflict. Here two mighty spiritual forces are seen, struggling for the mastery. When rival nations are embroiled, mustering troops and collecting ammunition and arms and all the necessaries of war, and when at last hostile armies take the field, their movements are watched on all sides with trembling interest; the character of their respective leaders is canvassed, the probabilities of victory or of defeat are calculated, and disastrous results to one or to both are predicted. But this world-conflict of which we speak is not physical, but moral; not between two armed masses, but between two great principles. Human nature is the battle-field, and the vicissitudes of the fight are to furnish instruction and enduring influence to the universe, as to moral excellence and as to moral evil. As to evil, especially, high instruction is here given: the endless forms in which it may appear, the positions it may assume, and all its manœuvres and modes of attack. But for this conflict, and its protracted and varied exposure on this field, it never could have been known, or even imagined, to what irrationality, debasement, and pollution it was capable of dragging down the responsible soul; in what enormous ingratitude and what dark abominations it could involve an intelligent being; what horrible forms it was capable of assuming; how insidious, how endless

in resources, and how all but indestructible it was! It was imperative that all this should be disclosed, and for one great reason, had there been no other, because otherwise the remedial measures must have seemed premature and have been unappreciated. It was disclosed; and when the world was fully prepared for it, but not earlier, that last and mightest instrumentality, of which God was to make use, was developed in all its completeness and its grandeur.

There was manifest wisdom, even necessity, in first bringing all that men themselves could effect to a prolonged and decisive test before the Most High, in the resistlessness and plenitude of His resources, interposed. For four thousand years the utmost power of man was allowed unlimited scope. In every part of the globe and under every variety of conditions, all that human research, human learning, human genius, human piety, and human virtue could accomplish was put to the proof. That these effected nothing, it would be a libel on the Creator himself to maintain. They were not, and could not, have been useless. So far as they were capable of reaching, they must have been effective, though they fell hopelessly short of the necessities of the case. But one grand object was secured by them, and the urgent need for higher wisdom and higher power than man's, for divine interposition, was at length wrought into the deepest convictions of the world. It is a well-authenticated historical fact that, at the time of the coming of Christ, not in Judea only, where such a thing might be accounted for on other grounds, but throughout the Gentile world, the intense, agonising desire for help from

above was felt; and not this only, but the ardent expectation was even cherished, that the needed help from above was close at hand. Wearied and disappointed, after unnumbered all-but-fruitless efforts for four thousand years, the world sent up a universal cry for Almighty deliverance. That cry was heard, and the answer to it was given, in the incarnation and the cross. The necessity is first proved and first felt, and then it is divinely provided for. The deep desire is first created, and then it is mercifully met and supplied. A wise father, in dealing with a rebellious son, does not exhaust all his resources at once, does not at first put forth the highest effort which he is capable of making; for if this should fail, he has then nothing on which to fall back. He advances step by step; rises from the less to the greater; adopts first one method and then another more likely to have effect, and then another yet more likely still; gradually augmenting the moral influences and forces,—till nothing more remains for him to attempt.

There is a marked progression, a gradual increase of force, in the methods which the Almighty has employed in dealing with men. By slow degrees He opens the magazine of his resources, beginning with the less powerful instruments, and rising at length to the highest and mightiest of all. He brings forth now one expedient and again another; and, at last, after patiently waiting for four thousand years, and having, by the wisest and most effective means, prepared and matured the world, He lays bare the deepest fountains of His own nature, and seeks to subdue man's obdurate soul by a final and mighty effort, by all that is mysterious and awful, con-

descending, compassionate, and godlike, in the fully-developed plan of His moral providence. The power of Christianity is centred in a Being, raised up once in all time, for an end as unique in its character, as it is glorious in all its relations and results. Jesus Christ of Nazareth is the symbol, the dwelling, and the source of all in Christianity which acts with regenerating and reclaiming force on the human soul. And Christianity, viewed in this light, and in its essential connection with an actual person, is as complex as it is mighty; but in its complexity it is strictly one, one in aim, even in action, and one in the mighty hand which wields it.

The distinctive glory of the New Testament is the record it contains of a Divine Incarnation, the one sole real Incarnation of all time. Rapidly but thoughtfully let us ponder the chief of the facts out of which this great mystery comes forth. More than eighteen hundred years ago, there lived on this earth a native of Judea, by name Jesus of Nazareth. He was a young man; he was brought up in very humble life; his reputed parents, his relations, and all his associates, belonged to the lower ranks of society. He was a common carpenter, working at his trade till he was thirty years old. At this age, of his own accord, without solicitation or encouragement from any quarter, he appeared in public; and after a ministry of only three years, he suffered death by crucifixion at the age of thirty-three. His youth, and his entire social circumstances and position, when viewed in connection with his pre-eminence as a revealer of the highest truth, with his personal wisdom so far surpassing in amount and in kind that of the most renowned sages,

and with his blameless, perfect, unexampled spiritual character, make out, as Christians believe, an essential and organic difference between him and all men—a difference not of office but of nature. The evidence of history, and the laws of the human mind, pronounce the impossibility of any mere man—especially in the circumstances in which he was placed—rising to that wealth of spiritual wisdom and that moral perfection which belonged to Him. An Incarnation of Divinity, in this unparalleled instance, is felt to be alone sufficient, and to be perfectly sufficient, to account for a combination of moral and spiritual phenomena with outward conditions, never realised except in Jesus of Nazareth. He must have been divine as well as human, the One Incarnation for all time, God in Man!*

But in this overwhelming mystery, we behold a new and the highest proof of God's antagonism to moral evil, a proof peculiar to the era of Christianity. This was the wondrous instrument, which in the fulness of the times the Great Being brought to bear on the human soul, and with which He came forth to contend with man's perverted and rebellious will. This is the instrument which for nearly two thousand years He has been wielding, not against His apostate children, but against their foe, the foe of all created being. Of necessity, the instrument wholly designed to bear upon a moral evil, and to effect a moral purpose, is itself of a moral nature. The fact of incarnation is also a truth appealing to the reason and the conscience. Had that fact been physically and externally attended with circumstances which

* See "The Christ of History," &c.

should have rendered it perfectly irresistible at the time, this would not only have been a contravention of the entire system of providence, but, constituted as human nature is, it must withal speedily have lost its power. The most vivid and overwhelming impressions on the senses, often repeated, and especially long continued, eventually cease to be felt. The extraordinary soon becomes common, and fails to excite wonder. Nor can it be overlooked, as the wisest theologians pointedly teach, that the only end of physical miracles is to arouse attention. Moral changes are effected, not through the excitement of the senses, or the imagination, but through the convictions of the understanding and the conscience. The mystery of Incarnation was not for the eye, but for the judgment, the heart, and the moral nature. Evidences of its reality in abundance were furnished; but it was a thing not to be forced irresistibly on the soul, but to be examined, to be deeply and reverently pondered, and to be embraced on solemn conviction.

Conviction of this mystery once reached, its necessary effect, at least its necessary tendency, can admit of no dispute. That the Most High had incarnated Himself, that He was so profoundly interested in His fallen creatures as thus to come down among them, and, in a way to us incomprehensible, to unite Himself to human nature, and make it a tabernacle for His wisdom, His purity, His truth, and His love: this fact, these principles, really believed, is there an instrument that can be conceived so sure to reach, subdue, and overwhelm the soul of man? The Divine condescension was ineffable. And, on the other side, the proof of God's antagonism

to evil was complete. His only connection with it, from first to last, has been in putting it down. But in order to put it down, there is nothing which He is not ready to do. The mystery of all time shall be unveiled, and the intelligent universe shall behold "God Manifest in Flesh."

II. New Expression and Medium of Mercy.—In the ineffable love of God, the Incarnate lived on earth, but in love yet more subduing and overwhelming the Incarnate died. The being in whom the Father dwelt, and through whom he uttered Himself to the world, so far as that was possible by a human medium, this being was despised and rejected, and at last expired ignominiously on a cross. Need it be here said that the infinite mercy of the Almighty had never been unexpressed, never destitute of a medium, from the first moment of human apostasy? But in the incarnation, and above all, in the cross, an utterance of this divine attribute was given, and a channel for its outflow was opened, such as the world never before had known.

It is not too much to assert that the spiritual recovery of the human race, while it was the end of the entire ministry and mission of Christ, was most manifestly and most mysteriously of all related to his death. For that recovery he often declared, not only that he was prepared to sacrifice his life, but that he expected nothing

less, and was indeed designated to this holy trial. In point of literal fact, for this and nothing less, he did at last sacrifice his life.

Without reasoning on the subject, no unprejudiced inquirer can deny that, from whatever cause, it is emphatically the cross, the suffering, the love of Christ, which has acted as a mighty spiritual force upon the soul of the world. Hardly less undeniable is it that the cross has thus acted, because it contains the most touching expression of Divine mercy, as well as offers the highest evidence of the invincible moral power of Redeemer. As a simple matter of fact, it is the doctrine of crucified love that has triumphed over man, that has been almighty through God, that has arrested, captivated, and regenerated human hearts. Wherever the cross has been wanting, Christianity has appeared shorn of its strength, an ineffective, lifeless, cold system. Wherever this has been lifted up, even though often associated with egregious human weakness and with serious human errors, it has proved an all but resistless power. The most expressive symbol, the most direct medium, and the chief fountain of the restoring and redeeming energy of Christianity, is the cross. It must not be imagined that the doctrine of the forgiveness of sin was new to the world at the coming or at the death of Jesus. It had been promulgated in paradise, and from that spot had issued forth, and been circulated over the whole earth. It was the original revelation given to man, to universal man. But such a basis as was now laid for human trust in it, the world had never seen; such influences and associations as now encompassed it, the

world had never experienced; such views of infinite purity, blended with infinite pity, as were now thrown open, had never before been presented. The Great Being, Himself caring for all the interests that were at stake, and gloriously providing for them all, promulgates pardon—free, unconditional, universal pardon; commands, invites, beseeches his guilty children to return to Him, and expostulates and remonstrates with them on the folly, the wickedness, and the utter destructiveness of their course. "God in Christ was and is reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto men." His great work in the world all along, the one end of his moral providence, had been to reconcile, to gain over men to himself. But in Christ, in Christ's mission as a whole, in his life, by his spirit, his character, and his teaching, and impressively and mysteriously in his death and his cross, He is redeeming them, winning them back, gaining their affections, reclaiming their perverted wills, and taking possession of their consciences.

In Christ, the world beholds very God, so far as it is possible for Him to be imaged in human form;—God pitying and loving His creatures, and adopting a method inexpressibly grand for putting down that evil, which is their disgrace and their perdition;—God mysteriously united to and embodied in a nature which was capable of toiling, weeping, bleeding, dying for men's salvation. The spiritual history of myriads of human beings is interpreted by that word, the cross. They have been arrested by this power, when every other had failed to reach them. Suddenly they have been attracted by an object which,

in its deep meaning, they had never before looked upon, incarnate, crucified, dying love! not dissociated from infinite rectitude, purity, majesty, and truth, but rather encompassed and irradiated by these glories. Suddenly, they have caught a glimpse of this divine mystery, the great mystery of godliness, and never after have they been able to remove their eyes from it—God in Christ; God in an attitude of amazing tenderness and pity, winning back His creatures to Himself. The wondrous sight, and the more wondrous truths of which it is the symbol, have taken entire and permanent possession of their whole being, and reclaimed and renovated their natures. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature, old things have passed away, behold all things have become new."

This is the sacred influence which The Most High, having Himself prepared, now wields against moral evil, and by which He is expelling it from the soul of man. Intense, infinite must be His abhorrence of it, when He contrives and puts forth means so stupendous for effecting its extermination. Not only shall the mystery of all time, God manifest in the flesh, be unveiled, but the incarnate One shall bleed and die on a cross! There is almighty strength in this symbol of utter weakness! There is surpassing glory in this amazing depth of disgrace! There is life, the life of the world, in this death!

Never were more prophetic words uttered than those of the Blessed Saviour of men, and never was prophecy more strikingly fulfilled, than this! "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me."

III. Perfect Humanity.—It would not be difficult, from the short memorials which survive, to produce subduing evidence, and to create a profound impression, of the moral beauty, the spiritual perfection of the character of Jesus. But we must here assume what few have ever dared to question, and turn at once to the Divine purpose in this manifestation of moral glory.

"If virtue were to descend to the earth, all men would fall down and worship her," said a celebrated divine, perhaps caring more for the rhetoric than for the accuracy of the sentence. It was replied by a divine of an opposite school, "Virtue *did* descend to the earth in the person of Jesus Christ, but all men did not fall down and worship Him; they took Him, and with wicked hands they crucified and slew Him." Perhaps in the felicity and withal justice of this rejoinder, it was overlooked that the high design of God, in this living impersonation of human virtue, nevertheless, was to gain the affections and to secure the worship of the world. And if Jesus did die, it must not be forgotten that He rose again. Virtue was laid in the grave, but after three days there was a glorious resurrection, and the life-picture of human perfection is fresh before the world at this hour. It is unhappy, that because one class of theologians have made the example of Christ all but everything, another have sought to represent it as next to nothing. That example is alone in the world and in all history, and it is an express Divine product, and for a purpose of transcendent interest. It is hardly possible to over-estimate the power to influence

the human soul, which lies in the matchless beauty and glory of the character of Christ, the image of human perfection, held up by God Himself, before his fallen creatures, in order to win them back to purity and truth. In neglecting this, we cast dishonour on a Divine instrumentality,—we shut our eyes to one of the chief wonders of moral providence, and we turn away from that which is fitted to penetrate to the deepest affections of our souls, and to reclaim and renew our perverted moral nature.

The Unseen antagonist of moral evil employs as one of his merciful and mighty methods of assailing and destroying it this unexampled development of human perfection. He brings forth in the sight of the world a living example of spotless moral excellence. Right in front of fallen humanity, he places an unfallen human soul, in all its attractive and subduing loveliness. He points to a human will, that was always in glad harmony with His will, that always acted faithfully, according to its constitution, and was always determined by the voice of conscience and reason. He reveals, so far as was possible through a human medium, His own spiritual glory, His wisdom, His purity, His tenderness, His mercy, His sweetness, and His beauty. The Divine, as it shall eternally shine forth from regenerated humanity, was mirrored in Jesus, and the mirror was held up aloft, that all the world might see, and the infinite attractions of very God were pressed out in the life and in the cross of the Man of Nazareth. What men ought to be, had often been declared in the clearest and strongest language, and was known by themselves, for it was written within them by a Divine hand. But mere words are poor and inexpressive.

With a point and force which no words could convey, the destiny and the duty of universal humanity were pronounced in an actual life. The God who hated sin, who only, always, and infinitely hated it, revealed to men in a bright and piercing form what He loved, and what they ought to love and become. To the eye and to the soul of the world, God was at pains to speak as He had never done before; to all the moral susceptibilities, to all the feelings of the heart, and to all the perceptions of the understanding, He spoke in a new and living—would that it had been, as it ought to have been, and one day will be, a resistless language!

IV.—New Revelation of Spiritual Truth.—The inexhaustible opulence of the Christian revelation needs to be dealt with either at great length, or not at all, and condemns a hasty and brief examination. But this last is alone possible to us here. We must take for granted the variety, the fulness, and the grandeur of the message which Jesus announced to the world. We must assume that the gospels are his message, and that they contain imperishable divine ideas undivulged before, and we must advance to the position, that these ideas are a power in the hand of the Almighty for putting down that which He abhors.

In one of its aspects, moral evil is ignorance, wilful

ignorance, a conscious putting aside of the truth, not suffering its holy voice to be heard, and acting in defiance of it. The original sin of our world is represented as ignorance, false views of The Most High, as if what He had clearly declared was untrue. This was immediate death to the soul, begun separation from the fountain of all life, the sign of separation, and also the cause of yet deeper separation and of ultimate ruin. But there is a life opposed to this death. The antidote takes its character from the evil, the cure from the disease.

Spiritual truth is the medium and even the very material of the soul's life. Hence, with striking beauty, it is written, "This is life"—its essence, its substance, that in which it consists—"this is life, eternal life"—What?—true spiritual insight, true knowledge—"to know Thee, the only true God and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent." All truth is quickening and restorative. The ignorant mind is a dead mind, and when knowledge is let in upon it, it is like a rising again from the dead, the beginning of a new career and kind of life, the opening of a new world. In the highest sphere of all, when the fallen will has put aside truth, and has acted in defiance of conscience and reason, and the soul has suffered a literal death-stroke, restoration to life is no other than its return to truth and its glad reception of it. The prime origin of death in our world was false views of God, and resurrection to new life can only be, and wholly is, by just views of God. The beginning of peace to the conscience, and of purity to the heart, the deep source of all impulses and motives to good, the strong corrective of the perverse will, the mighty restorative of moral power to its legitimate use,

is living, spiritual truth. Truth from heaven, shed down by the Holy Ghost, on the conscience, the understanding, and the heart, is life from the dead. "The words that I speak unto you," said Jesus, "they are spirit and they are life." Elsewhere he compares them to living bread, of which if a man eat he shall hunger no more, and again to living water, of which if a man drink he shall thirst no more.

The personal teaching of Jesus, in this view, was the opening of a deep and exhaustless spring, whose waters, after two thousand years, are as plenteous at this day, as fresh, as living and as vivifying, as when they first gushed from the fountain. In that teaching, to change the figure, God is seen pouring a flood of light upon the world, in which its darkness might be quenched. Eternal truth, by deliberate resistance to which man had fallen, in deliberate resistance to which all sin consists, was brought marvellously near. In new forms, invested with new attractions, through a new medium it was presented, and so plentifully, so variedly, and so ceaselessly, that it might be no longer possible to darken or to defy it. On all sides, God poured down light and truth. Man was revealed to himself; his nature, his sin, his danger, his escape, his duty, and his destinies. God was unveiled, in His being, in His attributes, in His merciful purposes, in His Providence, and in His redeeming agency. The plan of reconciliation was exposed in the open view of the world; its perfect freeness, the consequences of impenitence, the inevitable misery of the unreclaimed soul, future happiness and future punishment, were proclaimed aloud. And in all this, as if from His own

throne, in a voice of ineffable pathos, God cried to the world, "Oh, do not the abominable thing which I hate!"

V. New Fountain and Channel of the Holy Ghost.—The world had not to wait for a Divine Spirit till the unfolding of Christianity. It is impossible to read the books of the Old Testament, with openness and candour, without receiving the impression that they distinctly teach a constant supernatural influence on man. From the beginning, the Holy Ghost strove with the world, was wickedly resisted, but continued still to strive. The real antagonists in that portentous warfare, of which our earth was the theatre, were the spirit of man and the Spirit of God. The origin of the warfare was the revolt of man from his Maker. But the rebel was not abandoned to his fate. We have seen that various and wondrous methods, in succession, were adopted in addressing the human conscience and intellect and heart, and that the Almighty, in the early ages of the world, spoke now in tones of mercy, again in a voice of judgment, and at last through the medium of a peculiar and anomalous economy. But throughout, the power which went forth through these channels to affect man was Divine. These were so many methods through which the Infinite One sought to come, and did come, into contact with the human soul and take possession of it again. Any of

these was effectual, only so far as it brought down upon man a sense of God, and drew his thoughts and his heart back to God. It could be illuminating, purifying, or quickening, only because it proved to be a medium through which the Holy Ghost touched the human soul. The touch of God is life-giving, and responsiveness to that touch is the token of restored spiritual vitality. That which alone has power to overawe, to penetrate, and to subdue, is a sense of God, His reality, His nearness, His spiritual influence. In all the primitive economies of religion, as well as in the last and best, it was the Spirit of God alone that acted with quickening and holy force on the world. These primitive economies were not external and formal merely; a spirit was in them, a divine spirit, and that is ever mighty, and holy, and luminous, and loving, and pitying, and patient.

It has become the mode in these days, within the sphere of our classical literature, and in religious writing not of the kind reputed most safe, to exalt the idea of spirit, even of the Divine Spirit. An echo of the mighty voice of Scripture has gone out into the world; but it is an echo, and has all the distance and the vagueness of borrowed and reflected sound. Mystically and dreamily men talk of the great spirit of nature, and of a divine spirit in everything. There is a sense in which it is true, a grand and holy truth. There is verily a spirit in everything, because there is a God everywhere, a God acting, influencing, speaking, revealing Himself and bringing Himself into contact with His rational and responsible offspring. Everything has an inner meaning, a voice would we but listen to it, a voice which might

pierce to the depths of the heart. The mountain and the plain, the desert and the verdant field, the sea in its calm and in its fury, the river, the living spring, the humble flower, the moon in her queenly majesty, the sky bespangled with its countless diamonds,—are more than they merely seem. There is a spirit in them, because there is a God, and the open eye and the susceptible soul take in their meaning. Man meets in them his Maker,—divine power, beauty, serenity, majesty, purity, goodness, and love! He is calmed by the Divine Presence, overawed, solemnised, even instructed and sanctified.

But all this, it cannot be concealed, is vague, insecure, and often evanescent. Only in the light of the inspired volume does it become a clear, fixed, intelligible, and interpretable reality. There has been, from the beginning, a constant agency of the Spirit of God, through various media, on the understanding, heart, and conscience of men. And this has been Power, the only effective moral power, the secret source of all the good that has ever been accomplished, of all the successful resistance which has ever been offered to moral evil, and of all the triumphs which have ever been won in the great conflict.

Moral death has been overcome only by contact with moral life, the Highest Life. The Infinite himself has come near, has descended on the world, as an inspiring, illuminating, sanctifying, quickening influence. The difference between Christianity and all the economies that preceded it lies in this, that the points of contact between death and life have now been multiplied; that new foun-

tains have been opened, whence the influences from above might gush forth; and that new channels were constructed, through which these influences might flow out to the world.

Ever before, the world was unripe for a higher manifestation of The Divine. The time had not arrived. Many introductory and preparatory methods were indispensable. An adequate susceptibility must be created, and a deep and irrepressible sense of need must be awakened. Then, was the Creator to come down to man, as he had never before done. Then, was the power of the Holy Ghost, in all its resistless energy of life, to descend. At this new era, none of the spiritual influences which in succession had before acted on the world were lost; on the contrary, they were condensed and concentrated, and an addition of inconceivable amount was made to their number and their strength. With inimitable beauty and force of language, the unfolding of Christianity is described as a plenteous outpouring of the Holy Ghost; and these last times are specially honoured as "The times of the Spirit," because influence from above was then to descend in such ways and in such amount as had never before been known. The world, at many points at once, and with an awful vividness of impression, felt the touch of The Almighty, and it started, responsive to that touch. Each of the separate parts of that complex instrumentality which Christianity unfolds was a new and mighty medium, whereby The Living One could approach, and was to approach man, and to act divinely on his nature. The incarnation, the cross, the moral loveliness of Christ, and the living truth which he uttered,

were not only each a reality in itself, but they were, each, the voice, the envelopment, the medium, the chosen instrument of a mighty spirit; the illuminating, sanctifying, quickening spirit, the very Spirit of God. In each of these, and yet more in all of them together, the Holy Ghost descended and directly appealed to men. *Power* was in them, demonstration of The Spirit, not to be gainsayed. They brought near the sense of The Divine; God was in them, and by them was moving and acting on men.

Thus it has been for nearly two thousand years; the Holy One, through this mysterious and complicated instrumentality, striving with the world, pouring down the light of truth and the force of love, commanding all the appliances of infinite wisdom, infinite patience, and infinite power, and ceaselessly distributing, combining, and modifying moral influences of all kinds, in order that at length man might be won back to his Creator, to duty, to reason, to life.

The actual effect is, on many sides, embarrassing and inexplicable. The world is not Christian, and this fact reveals to us a marvellous exhibition of the divine long-suffering in contrast with the impatience and rashness of men. In their puny labours, men fret and consume themselves, unless they are rewarded by quick success. Eager, bustling, shortsighted, and impetuous, they soon abandon thankless and unproductive labour. The Great Being serenely pursues His mighty work, bestows four thousand years on the preparatory education of the world, and after His plan, with all this preparation, has been fully developed, and all the instrumentalities which His wis-

dom sees fit to employ have been set to work, *at the end of nearly two thousand years more*, his patience is stretched out still.

It is something to be able to say that, after so long a period, Christianity is even in existence. Few things in this world are two thousand years old, above all without exhibiting marks of decrepitude and approaching dissolution. Through what has not Christianity passed? During all these centuries the cross in one aspect or another has found an enemy in every human heart. The thing itself, the truths which it embodies, the submission which it demands, and the purity which it enjoins, have been an offence. At every point, Christianity has been assailed by very bitter and resolute enemies. Its historical basis, its facts, its doctrines, its moral precepts, its entire spirit as a system, through nineteen centuries, have drawn down all that learning, and talent, and wit, too often impelled by intense hatred, could effect. Many times, it has had to bear the assault of direct physical persecution. For some centuries after its birth it knew nothing but persecution. It stands almost the only example of the kind which the world furnishes; a class of men, no matter where found, no matter to what nation belonging, without aggression on their part, without provocation given, hunted like beasts of prey, for the sole cause of their religion. By the most powerful empire that has ever yet established itself on the earth, persecution, often bloody, merciless, and insatiable, was directed for centuries against it. But it lived on, and was even extended and strengthened.

Not to name the attempt, a most injurious one, which

was early made, to incorporate with it the peculiarities of Judaism, the new religion was assailed by all the ancient philosophies and religions of the world: and the idea was so far carried out to superadd dogmas and forms from more than one of the ancient mythologies, to the heaven-born truth. Christianity was beset, by the gorgeous philosophy of the east and by the mystic speculations of the west. But it survived, though it suffered severely from these assaults. The favour of men proved far more fatal to it than their hostility. It was caressed and courted, was associated with opulence, with honour, with rank, and became the path to worldly distinction. It drooped from that hour, and withered, and all but expired.

Endless were the strifes and divisions which then sprang up within itself, and by which it was torn in pieces. From the time when it was first flattered by the world, what a tale of pride, of selfishness, of deceit, of lust of power, of earthliness, of cruelty, and of inhuman depravity, has been unfolded! Safe from outward assault, in the lap of indulgence, that which had been Christianity, and was still baptized with this name, was converted into the disgrace and the scourge of humanity, a sanctuary of error, a sink of pollution. But it was not Christianity. Real Christianity was, and had ever been, apart from all this, and, in spite of it, had never perished. After nearly two thousand years, notwithstanding the countless and manifold evils by which it has been beset, it survives, and has not grown old. At this hour, it betrays none of the feebleness and decrepitude of age. In all the freshness and vigour of its youth, it yet lives. All

sorts of antagonists it has met, all possible forms of assault it has encountered; and at this moment, it is not vanquished but victorious. Having nobly conflicted with every foe, it is but erecting itself to look abroad upon a field which it shall at last proclaim all its own, and where it shall stand, without antagonist, and without rival. As yet, it is only working itself out from evils, which the ages have accumulated upon it. By-and-by, we shall behold it girding itself for mightier efforts than have before been witnessed, baring its arm and nerving its heart for the universal spiritual conquest of the world.

In estimating the religion of Jesus Christ, the basis of our calculations is often incomplete and unsound. Churches, and religious associations of all kinds, and Christians so called, do not constitute the whole of Christianity, whether as an effect or as a power. These do indeed constitute the visible, nominal Christianity of the world. But it is forgotten that far, far beyond these, Christian truth and Christian spirit have penetrated in a thousand directions, and exerted a blessed and holy influence. Into the outlying world, if we may so speak, there has gone forth a power whose effects are not to be calculated; for this reason, amongst others, that they are often long invisible, and surprise an observer by the suddenness of their after appearance. No candid person can for a moment doubt, that the secular literature of our day is perfectly different in its tone from what it was a century or even half a century ago. There are great principles, and a certain spirit, which find their source nowhere but in the New Testament, which seem

to have, at last, after ages of hard struggle, thoroughly established themselves in the general mind, never again to be dislodged. And there are, besides, other principles, originating in like manner only in the Gospels, which are as plainly fighting their way to general acceptance, though at present opposed with great vehemence on many sides. Christianity is a system of truths and laws, and every genuine spiritual truth that is rooted among men, and every pure governing principle that fixes itself in the human conscience, is a triumph of the religion of the Redeemer. One by one, Christian truths and Christian laws are advancing to the sovereignty of the world. Slowly but surely, they are advancing. The dominion of all true, and wise, and pure, and righteous, and generous, and divine principles secured, in other words, the reign of God in man established, Christianity shall then have reached its loftiest aim on earth—the restoration of a revolted world, the recovery and redemption of abused moral power. The original cause and source of sin, effectually and for ever removed, man shall be blessed, up to his utmost capacity of pure blessedness, and God in Christ shall be triumphant.

SECTION IV.

DESTINY OF THE MORAL UNIVERSE.

DARKNESS AND LIGHT.—NOT TO BE FOR EVER.—UNIVERSE OF LIGHT.—FRIENDSHIPS OF ETERNITY.—BENEVOLENT ACTION.—SPIRITUAL ENERGY.—SELF-DEVELOPMENT.—STUDIES OF THE FUTURE.—INTERMINABLE PROGRESS.—MENTAL, MORAL LIFE.—PERFECTION, BLESSEDNESS.—"LIFE ETERNAL."

SEEN AND UNSEEN STATES.

PATRIARCHISM in its primitive and its later forms, and Judaism, belong to the past; and so, one day, shall Christianism, with its complex and mighty agency. These have been instruments for a purpose; the purpose gained, the instruments are honoured in the success, and no longer employed. The varied economies and disciplines of spiritual providence on earth all are destined to pass away; the entire earthly state of being is temporary and preparatory. The existing world in its social, civil, moral, and religious relations, is everything to the race that now peoples it; but there have been thousands of such worlds since time on earth began, each with the same eager, burning, absorbing interest in life. They have gone, as that which now is shall surely go, but they have not dropped into the abyss of annihilation, to rise no more. A thousand times, and a thousand times again, a human population as vast as that which now covers the globe has vanished from "the seen," but only to reappear in "the unseen." This earth is ever emptying itself; "the unseen" is ever peopling and multiplying in a ratio which defies calculation. Grand, sublime, overwhelming shall be the congregation of the disembodied in the mysterious, future world! Is it lawful, is

it possible to imagine by the aid of such hints as the Christian Scriptures suggest, the mode of being, the system of things in that inscrutable sphere? above all, the mode, the system of being that shall reveal itself when the end shall have come, when the roll of earthly providence shall have been opened out to its farthest limit, when earth with its economies, and spiritual agencies, and disciplines, shall be numbered with the things that were but are not, when the pathway between the two eternities shall have been for ever closed, when the knell of time shall have been struck, and eternity evermore shall encircle creation? What is the final destiny of man, of created moral being?

Mingled light and darkness have hitherto fallen upon the created universe so far as it is known to us; the question is, shall the darkness be perpetuated beyond time, and shall the future be for ever begloomed with evil unconquered and unconquerable? I have already expressed * and sought to establish the conclusion that this cannot be, because, besides other consequences, it would involve the defeat of the great God and the ultimate triumph of evil. The triumph must be God's alone, and it must be universal and eternal, and the primitive and redemptive agencies and influences of the future world shall be continued till this triumph be achieved. In the end, which, however distant to us, is only a moment in eternity, evil shall be utterly extirpated from God's universe, and not a solitary created spirit shall exist in which, however far it may have fallen, sin shall not be completely and for ever subdued. Those who unite in this belief do

* See pp. 198—213.

not ignore, as is often unfairly laid to their charge, and they do not seek to explain away the terrible words of the New Testament, "wrath to come," "everlasting punishment," "weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth." They believe in their actual and awful verification after the death of the body, and they account such words so much the more terrible that the strongest and severest of them all fell from the lips of Jesus the Redeemer, not once, but many times. They judge that the necessity of immediate repentance and faith and of bowing down at once to the Divine mercy is not lessened but deepened, when it is shown, on the authority of Christ himself, that after death, impenitence, unsubdued here, shall and must, hereafter, meet with its righteous desert, and that in another state this righteous desert of sin shall be prolonged until its cause is for ever extirpated. But they shrink from the idea that the Great God can be ultimately baffled and defeated.

They maintain besides, and the fact can scarcely be questioned, that the teaching of sin, even in this world, is often wonderfully restorative and strengthening. Human virtue, they point out, is actually deeper, surer, and of a higher kind, by its fall. A good man never truly knows himself till he has sinned, and never hates sin so intensely, is never so strongly guarded against it, and never so determined to fight with it, as after he has yielded to temptation. On the other hand, he never sees with an eye so full-open, and so clear, the beauty of goodness—never has so subduing a feeling of this beauty—never so profound a sense of the holy, patient, loving God—and never such a clinging, yearning trust and dependence in Him, as

when he has sinned, grievously sinned. He becomes, actually through sin, a better, stronger, sweeter, simpler, braver, and more faithful son of God than before.

With regard to the words eternal, everlasting, and other allied forms, on which so much stress is laid, it has been repeatedly shown, on the basis of legitimate criticism, that they are often and unquestionably used in a limited sense. Sometimes they do indicate that which is strictly eternal; but in other instances they as clearly refer, not to eternity proper, but only to an extended and indefinite duration. Nor can it be omitted that both the happiness and the punishment of the future are everlasting, in their own nature; that is to say, they can never end except with the removal of their cause and ground.

The terms used in the New Testament, therefore, are not inconsistent with a probation of the soul and with its final redemption after the death of the body. And if this be so, there are, on general grounds, very strong considerations to favour this idea as most reasonable and most welcome. Looking broadly on the vast populations of the earth, and on the darkness and the vice amidst which, without fault of theirs, myriads of our race live and die, the conviction forces itself upon us that, in their case, so far as this world is concerned, probation is a name, and no more. If they are to be tried at all, in any real sense, it must be after death, and in another state of existence. Besides this, and hardly less palpably and forcibly, the case and condition of men in general may be put forward. However long any human being may have been tested and proved on earth, would it not be presumptuous to pronounce that the Great God had here

exhausted all his methods of influencing and subduing the evil will, and that in another state of being and under changed circumstances, that will could not be reclaimed and redeemed? Is it inconceivable, or even unlikely that the hardening effect of indulged sin and of constant resistance to conscience and to God, as witnessed here, might be exactly reversed in a condition where sin shall work itself out in more direct forms than are now possible, and without any of the ensnaring compensations and pleasures which often accompany it on earth?

God's great controversy with sin, instead of terminating with the brief limit of earthly life, shall perhaps become only more immediate, more intense, and more effective in another state. That process of spiritual purgation, which can be likened to nothing so much as to the gnawing of the undying worm and the torment of the unquenchable fire, may, through years, we know not how long, be varied in intensity and in form, and shall produce effects of which we can have no parallel in our present mixed condition. The created will, unsubdued and perverse, till it passes into eternity, shall be subjected to new penalties and new tests, impossible on earth. It shall be assailed by successive and overwhelming experiences unknown before. The anguish of conscience and the self-condemnations of outraged reason shall be endured as literally eternal punishment—eternal in its very nature, which even God could not terminate except by destroying its cause. But this furnace of probation, to which the New Testament likens the future of evil, shall it not illuminate and purify while it scathes? This blaze of trial, shall it not refine the true metal while it

consumes the dross? Shall not that day of eternity be one of overpowering revelation to impenitent souls—revelation as by fire; and shall it not then be seen by the most obdurate, as it never was or could be seen before, what sin truly is, and what it must ever come to? Shall not the evil soul discern, with an appalling vividness, impossible before, how unutterably hateful sin is in itself, and what infinite beauty and excellence and blessedness it had all along shut out from the vision? Shall not that soul be pierced through with the intense conviction of the enormity of its sin on the one side, and of the ravishing sweetness and glory of goodness on the other side; and shall it not become, of its own free choice, self-resolved, let whatever may betide, to yield without reserve to God with all the accumulated experiences and all the concentrated energy of its being? Shall it not feel that one thing, and one thing only, is now possible for it, at all hazards and whatever may betide, to abandon sin utterly and for ever, and to throw itself at the feet of God?

None will dispute that such a final result would marvellously illuminate the mystery of the universe. The central darkness of that mystery, as we have seen,* is this: "The Great God foresaw the inevitable entrance of sin, and yet gave being to the creation." But if we had authority to connect with the Divine foresight of inevitable sin, the foresight also of its final and utter extirpation, the mystery would be a mystery no longer. Time, however extended, is not a moment in eternity, and an eternity of purity and joy would be the final

* P. 173.

inheritance of every created spirit breathed into life from the heart of God.

But all the force, whether of the Scriptural or of the general evidence, is by no means wholly on one side. We have sought to show in the foregoing pages that moral evil must have been inpreventable, else indubitably it had never entered the universe. But if sin was inpreventable who shall say that it may not also prove irremediable, at least to some extent, however small? We know that sin is remediable. It has been remedied marvellously. Grant, also, that the probation and redemption of the soul after the death of the body are quite within rational belief. But who dare say that in no cases moral evil shall prove irremediable, even as it proved inpreventable? Would it not be presumptuous to assert this? Short-sighted, impulsive, and partial as we are, we dare not make our conceptions a law for Him, who sees, as we never can, all the grounds and all the issues of all things, as they bear on the foundation and the destiny of the vast universe of Moral Being. Certainly not. But is it less presumptuous to maintain that because sin was inpreventable at first, therefore it cannot be universally remediable at the last? And who would not exult to believe that it shall be universally remedied? The deep moral instincts of every generous nature yearn to anticipate, without a shadow of doubt, the final redemption of all souls.

On one point it is impossible to feel the least hesitation —eternal punishment in the sense of conscious suffering, even in a single instance, is inconceivable and unendurable by any sound and sane conscience. The observed effect of vice in this world, were there nothing more, is

sufficient to protect us against this horrible conception. The frequent tendency of sinful indulgence is to enfeeble, exhaust, and embrute the intellect and the conscience, to benumb and deaden the heart, and to render the being all but impassible. Some good men have suggested the idea that an evil soul hereafter may gradually sink into a condition of bare, dull, all but unconscious, being, without feeling or thought, without hope or fear.

With great reverence, but without hesitation, I venture to express the conviction that if the Great Being foreknew that even this eternal torpor, but much more that eternal misery, conscious suffering, would be the doom even of a single creature, it is incredible that he should have given existence to that creature. Not only no principle with which human beings are familiar could vindicate this conception, but it is awfully at variance with all ideas of moral excellence and of common humanity. This, at least, is surely unquestionable, that, were but a single immortal spirit to be eternally miserable, no truly good being in the universe could ever be happy. It would be an intolerable torture to all; and the higher and the purer they were, only the more intense would be their sympathy and their suffering. Each would long and agonise to bear a part in the doom of the lost one, and by any and all means to rescue and save him. Such is the nature which the God of infinite compassion and of tender mercy hath given us, and He is in Himself, only in an infinite degree, what He hath made us. It is impossible that He can be the real ultimate cause of such a destiny to his own creature.

These words, *eternal*, *misery*, *eternal misery*, fall easily

from the tongue, but they must be used by multitudes without the faintest conception of their unfathomable meaning. I must repeat that the idea is inconceivable and unendurable by any sane and sound conscience. It is impossible that we can really think or feel what we are saying when we utter the words. A soul in pure, sheer misery, wrung, tormented, agonised? The coldest, hardest, stoniest heart would be overwhelmed with intense pity, would be made wretched by the spectacle, and would be only eager to relieve the sufferer. But to know that that lost soul was absolutely hopeless, and that the wringing and the torment and the agony could never, never, never terminate! This no man and no angel could sustain even as a conception. The conception would drive him to distraction, to insanity, to self-annihilation, if that were possible!

Meantime, be it borne in mind that the reasonings which we have attempted to conduct, and the principles which we have sought to establish throughout this discussion, go to the conclusion that, with moral evil, except as its eternal antagonist, and that even with physical evil, except in its amount and as a corrective and redeeming influence, the Holy and Good Being has never had, and can never have, any connection here or hereafter. Except under these conditions no Divine agency is put forth, and no Divine agency is needed. Always, everywhere, moral evil is its own punishment (except as to special modes, forms, and times), punishment sufficiently awful without any foreign interposition; and such, withal, that no agency, not even that of the Almighty, could prevent it from descending.*

* It ought to create no difficulty to intelligent piety that the

The last dream of a piety which yet shrinks from the idea of the final extirpation of all sin and all punishment is this, that on the principle—even if to an extent indefinitely small—of the perpetuation of evil in the future, in a form which we cannot comprehend, there would result a relation essential to the moral stability of the universe. Fear and love are the two grand forms of motive to created mind; they are the two pillars on which created virtue is upheld. Beyond this earthly state, there shall be presented to the redeemed and the unfallen, what shall teach them as nothing else could, the nature and the enormity of evil. The universe shall contain a miniature type of sin in its last results, a solitary image, not of conscious suffering, not of misery, but of the doom which is condensed in that tremendous word, perdition,—a once live coal, quenched and cold and dead, a fire gone out in the blackness of darkness. The thought is unutterably affecting. Far, far without, not beyond the range of celestial vision, but not obtruding upon it, there shall be a dim and dark and mysterious phantasm; the only speck in a vast flood of radiance, and too remote withal to cast upon it even the faintest shadow! But

punishment of sin is represented in the Scriptures as the act of God. So far as respects the forms of physical evil on earth, we have seen that this is literally true. And if, in the wider and deeper sense, sin be its own punishment, it is nevertheless a right and fitting thing that it should be so, and cannot but be so; and this necessity is not contrary, but altogether according to the will of God. It is an eternal law which commends itself, and essentially belongs to Infinite Wisdom. The result, therefore, though not caused, except in its special mode, by God, is in harmony with His Being, takes place under His government, and is naturally and intelligibly connected with His agency.

it is a dream without foundation, the baseless fabric of a vision.

On the double ground of Scripture and of reason, it is here maintained that, when the entire scheme of moral providence shall have been unrolled and fulfilled, the only created existence, The "All," shall be "a universe of light"—multitudes, past all reckoning, all conception; countless, perhaps, even as separate orders; multitudes of beings, luminous and luminiferous, blessed and pure, united in a harmony never to be disturbed. The ultimate destiny of the spiritual creation, in the view of reason and of revelation, is a condition of vast, select, permanent, spiritual friendships and fellowships—fellowship not only with the Father of spirits, and not only with Christ, the human impersonation of God, but with all wise and good beings in the universe—angelic and human. The associations of the future must be the noblest and the purest which it is possible to conceive. That future is truly to us, and must ever be so long as we are on earth, in many of its aspects, the dark unknown, and he is not wise who is not overawed by this thought. When we stand by the bed of the dying it seems to us as if they were to be cut off from all they had known and loved, as if they were leaving home and venturing into a strange land; and with bitter tears we bid them farewell. But the very truth must be that a disembodied human mind, passing into the unseen, shall find not strangers, but friends; and shall receive the congratulations of wise and great beings, the holy welcomes offered by warm and noble hearts. Friendship on earth is the selectest human good. But it is rare. The direct, perfect fellowship of heart with

heart, mind with mind, conscience with conscience, soul with soul, is seldom realised on earth, perhaps never. But it is the destiny of all the good hereafter. Every spirit within the vast range of holy being shall at last be worthy, in its degree, of confidence, of respect, and of love, and shall be ready to return the tribute in the largest measure. Angelic natures, with their opulence, their purity, their simplicity, their ardour, and their strength, shall supply an inexhaustible source of noble friendships. Human nature, revealed in men gathered out of all nations, and ages, and states of society, men who have passed through all kinds of discipline, and reached all kinds of perfection, shall offer a field vast enough for eternity. Angelic and human beings shall present wondrous forms of mental and moral excellence, ravishing spiritual beauties, attractive and endearing virtues, priceless worth! It is not possible to exaggerate the joy and the sweetness of friendships, wide as the range of holy being, free and spontaneous, pure and perfect and lasting as eternity.

But this vast and sacred fellowship shall be a scene of marvellous power and of mutual spiritual influence. The elder sons of creation shall have much to impart to the younger, and even the younger, out of their limited earthly experience, shall be able to interest, perhaps also to instruct, the elder; each in his degree shall be at once a receiver and an imparter of truth and of holy impulse. It would degrade the eternal future to conceive of it as mere personal enjoyment, of however exalted a kind. There shall be both occasion and scope for the highest occupation of all the spiritual energies and of all the benevolent

affections. Mutual giving and receiving, blessing and being blessed, shall be the eternal law of heaven.

At the same time, and quite in harmony with this fact, the highest possible self-development must be the eternal aim and effort of created moral being; and with this, while it bears first on the individual, the common elevation and progress of the whole are identified. Spirit is essentially active, and the future is distinctively the world of spirits. The Christian doctrine of a resurrection pointedly excludes the attribute of animal life from the material part of the human being in another state. Animal life quenched in the grave is never more to be rekindled. The only life above shall for ever be mental, that is, spiritual life. And, until the resurrection, the unseen is literally and altogether a world of souls.

This conclusion, it must be owned, to a certain class of associations and to certain modes of thinking, is not welcome. A world of pure spirits suggests only the idea of perfect quietude, a state of motionlessness, unproductiveness, coldness, and silence. It is difficult for us to conceive of activity, except in connection with agitation and noise and outward product. There must be something for the voice, for the hands, for the physical energies, something to be done, in our sense of the word doing, to be produced, something that the eye can see, a palpable, outward reality. But we forget that the very highest form of activity is spiritual activity; or, rather, that there is no activity, nothing that deserves the name, except of spirit, the activity of intellect, conscience, and heart: all else is only semblance, shadow, form, type; the substance and reality are of the soul. Thinking is

working, and feeling is working; desiring, loving, devising is working; the most energetic, productive, vital thing in the universe is thought, purpose, affection; at the basis of every product, plan, work, are thought, desire, feeling: the cause of all action, of all motion, lies in thought and feeling and will; and when we say that the future is the world of spirits, that is, of thought and will and feeling, we do in the same breath convey that it is activity in its highest possible form.

The illimitable range of truth shall lie spread out for investigation before intelligent beings. This shall constitute the study of eternity, the grandest, noblest consecration of the most exalted created powers. And in this there is not only an object to occupy and to draw forth the energy of the spiritual nature, but also a medium of the most extended spiritual development. Amidst not only the noble friendships and fellowships, but also the studies and activities of eternity, each spirit shall for ever work out its own sublime destiny, develop its unknown capabilities and resources, reveal ever-new intellectual and moral beauties, evolve ever-new mysteries and new glories; and thus invest the region in which these come forth with new grandeur and new sanctifying power, to delight the eye of God himself, and to exalt his creatures' conceptions of his inexhaustible opulence and of the hidden wealth of the workmanship of his hands.

Say that immensity, the dwelling-place of souls, can only be a profound and vast silence! But silence, if the veil, is also the eternal unveiling of an underlying energy, individual and social, which shall know no intermission, but shall become ever more intense and more resistless

with the revolutions of eternity. The most overwhelming, although the simplest idea, which we are able to form of power, is in connection with silent life, the Life of the Infinite Being. Before all worlds, in his own eternity, God was Life! A Living Spirit! Thought, affection, conscience, will! no more! The infinite mental and moral Life!

For us it is hardly possible to conceive of mere life as a blessing—at least an exalted blessing. It is so associated in our minds with its accidents, with the objects of sense by which it is surrounded, with occupations and interests out of itself, with external sources and materials of enjoyment, that, if these be taken away, what remains seems to us scarcely worth possessing. But life itself—silent life, mental, moral, spiritual life, away from all its accidents—simple existence, to a rational and moral being, with the deep meaning of that existence, for ever evolving itself, is a blessed, a glorious, and a mighty thing.

Life, mighty, energetic, silent being, is the destiny of the created moral universe; yet not wholly dissociated from all that may be called accidental or adventitious. In the case of one order of intelligent beings, redeemed human spirits, this is emphatically true. Their life, in its very source and cause, shall supply accidents, hardly less precious than the substance itself, with which they are associated. Theirs is life pointing back to a death—the death of the Incarnate One. The Incarnation and the cross do all but make up their moral being, so deeply are they connected with their moral history. Theirs is life begotten of love, incarnate, redeeming, crucified

love. It is life given back from an awful perdition. It is the life of minds re-united to God, after a dark apostasy. It is life restored to the parent life, as it ought never to have been separated. But away from all its specialities, in common with that of angelic natures, and with the entire being of the created moral universe, it is life from God, life in God, as the stream contains the waters of the fountain—"We are made partakers of a Divine Nature." It is life in its highest, purest, noblest sense, realising the very conception of it in the mind of God. It is life in all the opulence, freshness, and glory of the original Divine Idea—eternal life. "This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." In one aspect, living is feeling, pure, warm, intense, happy feeling; but in another aspect as expressed in this passage, living is knowing,—getting to know the highest, grandest truths, which yet we never can perfectly know. The kingdom of truth is illimitable, and He who reigns in it is "The Incomprehensible," not only unknown, but unknowable. To the central effulgence of God we can never come, only to the edge of the shadow cast by the Infinite shall we ever reach; but that is the very place of adoration. Now and again, as we prostrate ourselves there, a gleam shall dart through the darkness, and tell us that there is a sun, but also that it is never to be looked upon face to face. Distant, straggling hints of the great truth, unutterably precious, we shall be able to collect; but there shall be a reality beyond, absolutely infinite, which must for ever be far more unknown than known. The hints we gain shall point to that infinite reality, and belong to

it. We shall treasure them, and continue to adore and wait. Another and another feeble but precious ray shall fall on us, and encourage us to watch still for the sun. Life in the immortal world shall be no other than this, to rise higher and higher towards that height which we can never climb, because it is infinite, leaving below us as we ascend a depth which there is no line to fathom, while around us stretches an expanse measureless as eternity. But it is no doubtful striving, to which the future invites, and which it promises; on the contrary, it shall open out into an interminable series of crowding and brightening successes. Every step shall be a true advance, every effort a triumph. Overawed, but not disheartened by the conviction that "The Infinite," whether as Being or as Truth, is never to be perfectly known, we shall be enraptured by the deep assurance that "The knowable" of God, eternity shall not exhaust. Ever brighter, ever grander, ever more ravishing, more strengthening, and more sanctifying shall be our conceptions of spiritual truth and of "Him who is past finding out!"

THE END.

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